AN ISLAND CHRONICLE



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AN ISLAND CHRONICLE

SOME BORZOI BOOKS
SPRING, 1924

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE
J. ANKER LARSEN

WOMEN AND WIVES
HARVEY FERGUSSON

THE PITIFUL WIFE
STORM JAMESON

COUNTRY PEOPLE
RUTH SUCKOW

TONY
STEPHEN HUDSON

WINE OF FURY
LEIGH ROGERS

IMPERTURBE
ELLIOT H. PAUL

SANDOVAL
THOMAS BEER

AN ISLAND CHRONICLE

by

WILLIAM CUMMINGS



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1924

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AN ISLAND CHRONICLE

I

The Island of the Fist lies in a general northerly and southerly extension along the New England coast. It is separated from the mainland to the westward by a pleasant bay two miles in breadth; to the east the misty waters of the Atlantic roll to far horizons.

It is called the Island of the Fist because of the peculiar formation of its northern extremity, which rises in a great cape—the Fist itself—straight out of the sea. The curved highest reach of the promontory corresponds to the row of knuckles along a clenched hand; from this high ridge of knuckles the face of the cliff drops sheer into the sea, where the giant fingers, groping in mysterious regions, have clutched with everlasting strength the deep foundations of the earth. Inland the land slopes away gradually, diminishing in breadth, till it lies at last, just above the level of the waters, a long narrow wrist, and on either side of this wrist the waters of the sea and the waters of the bay ebb and flow, to the east and to the west.

Seen from a great height on a summer day, the bit of green land is like a tree floating at full length but anchored. The main roadway, like a trunk, extends from end to end of the island; from this, like limbs and branches, other roads and lanes spread away at varying angles, now visible, now lost to view in the rolling masses

of foliage; and the scattered cottages, barns and silos, painted red and white, resemble the clustered flowers or fruit of some strange genus.

The main road or trunk is six miles long, and at the end of it farthest from the Fist a cluster of fruit, richer than any other, hangs full ripe at the very top of the tree. It is the cluster of houses, barns and small shops that constitute the village of Melton.

Melton is serene, as places and people who have a past are apt to be, especially when, as in this instance, that past is of no particular importance. A community of native New England people farmed the island and fished the surrounding waters for generations, learning through years of experience to meet the difficulties of island life. By means of hard work, thrift and caution they gradually prospered till at last they achieved the assurance of moderate success. On this basis of assurance they came in time to erect other structures than farm-houses and cattle-pens, and Melton became stately. Its people no longer fished or farmed with their hands; alien peoples came to do that work for them, and the natives dealt instead in the stocks and bonds of several corporations thus erected. There is the Co-operative Creamery, the Island Produce Exchange, the Transportation Corporation, which operates the little ferry, the Feed and Fertilizer Company, and the Island Purchasing Service. Together they form a benevolent trust; the original motive behind them was a commendable desire for co-operation.

Melton is an ideal summer retreat. It has atmosphere, with its stately white houses and towering elms; it has the sea, with all its possibilities of pleasure; it has a sort of isolation which is an asset, for the basis

of summer journeying is a desire of people to "get away—to get away from everything!" "City people" come to Melton in the summer and are happy toying with their several illusions. Some come to "rough it"; some for a taste of simplicity; some for the adventure of new contacts. But when the days begin to diminish in length, when the sea breezes begin to savour of autumn sharpness, the last of the "summer people" hasten back to the city and the sophistications that they really love, leaving Melton, richer and wiser, to care for itself alone through the long winter—to care for itself well, so that it shall be there, charming and isolated, when they want to see it again.

Thus a summer and its transients had come and gone. The sombre days of autumn had followed; now winter lay over and about the Fist. Winter comes to the island in many ways: sometimes it descends with howling winds and squalls of sleet; sometimes it comes softly from landward, snowing steadily for two or three days and changing magically every aspect of the earth, the sea and heavens; sometimes it comes just as a killing cold—withering, gnawing, inexorable.

And always there is the wind—blowing, blowing. This January morning the wind was bitter with a kind of despair as it drove in off the sullen sea. Old man Santos felt the bitterness of it sifting through the many thicknesses of his clothing. Behind him, through the rents in the cover of his cart, he heard its melancholy whistle. He sat immobile in the dusk of the morning and listened to the rhythmic beat of his horse's hoofs on the frozen road—the road that reached out across the island to the base of the Fist, whither he was bound.

Both he and his old white horse were accustomed to this journey. Every morning, in summer and winter alike, they took into the village the milk of Santos' cows. Having delivered it at the Co-operative Creamery, they drove back again, like the ghosts of a man and a cart and an old white horse, unseen of humanity, battered by the elements.

Santos was Portuguese. He had come to America years ago, had gone to work as a farm-hand on the island, and had never left it. By work and thrift and singleness of purpose he had prospered; in time he came to own his own farm, his herd of cows became a credit to the community; and now he was content to go on from year to year, living in simple prosperity, improving his farm and the quality of his herd, and putting more money into the bank. He was a very sane old man. He never pounded his chest and told how important he was; and he never outgrew his own people.

"I prosper," he said, with a smile on his dark old face, "because I obey God an' Nature, I go to mass, I avoid dissipation, an' I work hard. I do not desire too much." That was his whole philosophy of life, summarized.

Now the wind was cutting down from the north, right into his face, seeping through his clothes, and chilling the scant flesh on his bones. In the village the houses broke the full sweep of the wind, while overhead the great trees moaned and thrashed in the dreary gale. But soon Santos emerged from the village, left the cold white houses and creaking trees behind. From the top of Price's hill a wide panorama lay before him, a panorama not to be seen in the dusk of the morning, but clearly

visible to his familiar knowledge. Straight away northward the drab reaches of the island spread, divided into irregular fields by irregular grey stone walls. Over to the left lay the silent bay and the city on its farther shore, where faint points of light shone wanly. To the right the plane of the sea, restless and bleak, spread to a line where it met the sky, gleaming now with a faint brightness.

The old man drove down the hill and out across the rolling road, six long miles, with the wind in his face. Houses were scattered along the way, lonely and shivering under gaunt trees; some of them looked weary and pitiful in their cold sleep, others showed a bright eye of lamplight and the first slow movements of the day. Here and there cows lowed in warm barns. In occasional sudden lulls of the wind he could hear the wash of great waves. And always, lost under all other sounds and silences, because of their familiar monotony, there went the regular clop-clop of his horse's hoofs and the recurring squeaks of the off hind wheel of his cart.

At last he came to the end of the rolling fields. For a moment he had a glimpse of the ocean, a welter of black madness; then the road dipped and he was in an alley—an alley across the frozen marshes, between low walls of dead reeds, where the wind whined and rattled like an army of ghosts about the stark bodies they had abandoned.

"Get on, you!" Santos shouted to the horse, rousing himself and shielding his mouth with his hand. The old white horse tossed his head in irritation at the wind and plodded on as before. Soon they topped the rise out of the marshes. It was now almost light. Ahead of

him Santos saw the bleak plain of the Fist rising against the pale sky, and at its base he could discern his own homestead, the grey buildings huddled together in the cold, and grey smoke whipping away from the chimney.

Instinctively he urged the horse on again. They were making progress. Soon they were passing through the midst of a group of houses—the thirty-odd drab, unpainted, weather-stained houses of the Portuguese. It was an unlovely little settlement; many of the scattered building were no more than shacks—a collection of dreary habitations, sombre, desolate, dirty, depressing. Yet Santos was glad to be in the midst of them. The people within them were his own people. He knew them all and understood them; he had his place among them, and his own importance. There was stir and movement about, and the old man came to life in response to the life around him. Dogs barked at him familiarly; the uncombed heads of children appeared at windows; a man waved to him from the doorway of a shabby barn; he could hear the raucous voice of a woman scolding. The world had come to life at last.

Old man Santos jerked on the reins and the horse took up a smarter pace. They crossed the wrist where the waters of the sea and the waters of the bay almost cut through the narrow strip of land that made a roadway, and soon he was in his own back yard.

Joe came to meet him and began to loosen the harness of the blown old animal. Santos threw the reins on the horse's back and got stiffly down out of the cart.

"'S cold, Joe! Cold! An' the win's like a knife!"

Joe smiled at him with flashing teeth and eyes.

"Spring is comin' soon," he called from the other side

of the horse. "Soon you'll be ploughin'," he said to the beast as he started after him toward the barn.

Old man Santos stood and watched the lad go, flapping his arms meanwhile to loosen their stiffness. Then he smiled and shook his head at the indomitable optimism of youth, pulled off his gloves, and went into the house.

Mrs. Santos met him in the kitchen with bright volubility. The air was thick with the fumes of good cooking. The warmth sent twinges through his half-frozen feet. He sat down at the table and began to eat, and soon he took on new vitality. The first clear gleam of the morning sun shone in a bar along the floor. Joe came across the yard, singing in his tenor voice a stave from a song—something about a love-nest—and vaguely it completed Santos' content. As the lad's voice mounted against the towering incline of the cliff and was echoed back, wind-whipped, upon itself, the old man smiled into his coffee-cup.

A moment later Joe came into the kitchen to breakfast. He was handsome in a dark way, with a rather thin face, black hair and fine eyes; his body was a splendid creation of whose beauty he was not conscious—broad at the shoulders, long in torso, slim and supple, and strong.

As he washed his face and hands at the sink, old man Santos called to him, without turning from his own affairs at the table, "What you singin' 'bout so early?"

"Early? No! All day long!" Mrs. Santos exclaimed over her fat shoulder.

Joe smiled and bent over the basin.

"I make too much racket for you?" he asked.

"Ah, no! But tell me this—why you singin'?"

The lad wiped his face on the roller-towel and

shrugged. "I do' know," he said. "Jus' for fun."

"It is the youth," Mrs. Santos suggested with a laugh.

"Ah? Not always," the old man remarked, with a sly look. "Sometimes it is—the love."

Joe sat down at the table, and as the old man looked at him closely the blood began to show under the lad's clear skin. Santos perceived it; his eyebrows went up and his smile became a laugh that emphasized the countless wrinkles in his old dark face.

"Look!" he cried to his wife, pointing with his knife at the victim of his shrewdness. "Look! He is in love. Only love will make a man sing before breakfast."

Joe's eyes fell before the probing gesture and the laughter of the old man. Then, smiling stiffly, he challenged, "You say so, but that don't prove it."

"You see? You see?" the other cried, turning to his wife. "He does not deny it. No! How could he?"

"That would be easy," Joe suggested, with a shrug.

"Ah! Yes? Maybe not. Sometimes a man does not deny. An' then," he went on, "an' then he *is* in love."

Joe made no response, but took on an air of unconcern, eating heartily, with large gestures and a good appetite. His face still burned, for the old man's shaft had struck him fair. And Mrs. Santos, perceiving that the lad *was* in love, was filled with a strange, fluttering desire to protect him.

"More coffee?" she said to her husband.

He passed his cup and she poured the dark liquid into it.

"Look!" Santos began again. "Look! He has been here eight—ten days, an' already . . ." He made a wide gesture, throwing both hands out as if to spread upon the

table for his wife's inspection the astounding results of the young man's activities in the brief period of ten days.

"You want sugar?" she asked, passing the bowl. "Drink. Let Joe alone. How could he be in love in ten days?"

"As good as ten years, if all is right. Why not?"

"Bah!" she exclaimed. "Here? On the Fist?"

"Anywhere," he answered. "Yes, even on the Fist."

"Bah!" she exclaimed again. "Don' be foolish! Coffee, Joe?"

As Joe passed his cup Mrs. Santos winked at him slyly, with a vigorous little toss of her head. Thus she expressed her sympathy and her adherence to his cause. Joe's gaze fell before that demonstration; he knew that he had won her allegiance because she perceived the truth in what her husband had said.

The old man rose from the table, filled and lighted his pipe, and sat in the sunlight smoking. Soon Joe finished his breakfast too. Mrs. Santos began to clear away the dishes.

"Want me t' go t' town for feed?" the boy asked.

"We got enough till next week. Better cart some sand f'r the barn."

"I could do both to-day."

Santos looked up at him shrewdly. "So?" he said. "So?" Then, after a pause, he asked, "You like here, Joe?"

At that Mrs. Santos ceased her rattling of the dishes.

"Sure. It's all right," Joe said.

"You think you'll stay? Think you'll stay all summer, maybe?"

Joe shrugged. "I'm satisfied," he said. "You're the boss. It's up t' you."

"You stay, then," Santos said slowly. "An' Joe! You think we need feed to-day?"

The lad's shoulders moved in their customary gesture. "Sand's wet now," he suggested. "It's a good day t' go t' town." He looked very unconcerned, very matter-of-fact. He extracted a cigarette from a package and rolled it in his fingers. Santos regarded him smilingly.

"I guess you got t' go t' town, eh, Joe?"

Joe looked at him frankly. The boss was a very discerning old man. "I got t' get some things," the boy confessed, his teeth flashing in a smile.

Santos nodded. "Take the grey pair an' the dump-cart," he said. "An' don't forget the blankets—it's cold. You got money, Joe?"

"Yuh, I got some."

Joe lighted a cigarette and went out into the cold clear sunlight. Soon the dump-cart was bumping along the rutted road toward town, but its rattling racket was drowned under the swelling notes of the song the lad flung out across the windy marshes.

What he had to get in Melton was a new neck-tie, for Joe had fallen in love with a girl.

II

Joe Silviedra was twenty, but he seemed mature beyond his years. He could do any physical labour easily and his stamina was inexhaustible. He was never tired out; after a day of hard work in the fields or in the winter woods he would eat voraciously and be ready for any jollification the evening might offer.

His people were small farmers—gardeners—in Vermont. His father had died from a gangrened wound received and improperly attended during the winter logging. Joe's brother had then, at once, married his girl and brought the buxom bride to live at the home place, and Joe had soon found that there was nothing for him there but trouble, because the alluring proximity of his brother's wife was a constant menace to the decency of his intentions.

She was a young woman of extraordinary vigour, immense vitality and surging passions—physically insatiable. And she was aware of Joe. One day as she handed him a cup of coffee while they were at the table together, she noticed his hand shake; she recognized that uncontrolled movement for the trembling of his very strength; it made her gay, made her laugh, made her eager and daring.

Joe liked his brother; he had no intention of running the risk of any sort of trouble, and he could have man-

aged very well if the woman had let him alone. But the young fellow and the situation fascinated her; she wanted to see precisely what she could do to him, wanted to see just how much he could stand. As he withdrew before her deft and inquisitive advances she became more inquisitive, more deft, more eager, till it seemed to Joe that she was about him everywhere and all the time. He could think of nothing but the swaying lines of her body as she moved about the house, her lips that smiled at him, half in mockery, her eyes with their continual challenge, her voice that sang love-songs raucously.

And at last she found the limit of his endurance. It was a sleepy Sunday afternoon in summer. The woman had taken her bath in the kitchen—there was no bathroom in the house; her husband was asleep on the shaded front porch; Joe was dressing to go into the town. As she passed his room on her way to her own she paused at the door, which was open.

"Goin' out?" she asked.

"Yuh."

"Turn roun' an' let me see how you look."

Joe turned, dressed but for his coat and hat, and faced her. A red cotton kimono hung about her body. In the dim light of the hallway her lips and eyes glowed, her face and throat and arms were luminous.

"Here," she said, advancing into the room, "let me fix your tie."

As she approached him the thin kimono fluttered in the breeze from the open window, indicating, half revealing the mysterious lines and contours of her rich young body. She fussed with his tie while the odours of her warm washed body rose about him, and his eyes caught

glimpses of her bosom beneath the hands moving at his throat.

"You got a girl, Joe?" she asked, looking into his face with a mocking smile.

"No," he said gruffly. "I got no time for girls."

She laughed at that—a quiet laugh. "Wise ol' man!" she mocked. As part of the mockery she leaned against him lightly. His limbs twitched under the pressure. He tried to move away, but she held him with firm fingers at his tie.

Joe surrendered—caught her in his arms and crushed her body into his, felt her relaxed flesh tremulous under his moving hands. Her face was raised with a strange expression of amusement, curiosity and astonishment. He kissed her again and again—her lips, her throat, her shoulder, her bosom. He couldn't draw her close enough or hold her tight enough. Something in him reached out to absorb her completely. He was mad, palpitating, passionately ravenous.

She was satisfied with that surrender—satisfied but startled, and a faint fear stirred in her. She hastened to withdraw from the contact, for she was not yet ready to surrender herself. She put up her hands and pushed him off—held him farther and farther away; then as he stood there stupidly, regaining his self-control—roused, unsatisfied, angry with himself—she smiled and patted him on the shoulder, left him, and went down the dark hall, with guilty quietness, to her own room.

The next day Joe drew out of the bank all the money he owned, put the things he wanted into a suit-case, and left the house very quietly in the night.

On the discovery of his departure his old mother was

voluble with despair; his brother was angry; the woman was chagrined—disappointed and sorry. She hadn't meant to drive him away. No, certainly she hadn't meant to do that. The place seemed dreary without him.

Joe went to New York and worked for a time on the West Side, in the shipping-room of a candy factory, a place of warm sweet odours. Crowds of careless good fellows worked there, mostly Italians, a few Germans, a few Irish. There were swarms of girls too, girls of mixed nationalities and varying degrees of comeliness and virtue. Joe was a careless good fellow with all of them. He liked New York. There were countless new experiences for him here, and complete freedom for testing them. He took everything as it came, throwing inhibitions to the winds; he became familiar with the girls, gambled and drank with the fellows.

Just before Christmas the factory closed down; the workers were scattered; Joe found himself alone and lonely. He couldn't return to the Vermont farm, but he suddenly wanted to. New York seemed to him hideous and threatening. He fled from it and returned to New England.

In the smaller city he had gone into a motion-picture theatre to be warm. It was late in a January afternoon; soon he'd go out into the streets again, wander around awhile, eat, and find a room. To-morrow he'd look for a job. A young fellow sat beside him enjoying the picture, moving in his seat in response to the developments on the screen—eager, a little tense. When the customary final close-up kiss faded out he relaxed all at once and settled back in his seat. Joe yawned and stretched himself. The young fellow looked at Joe and smiled.

"Good pi'ture, eh?" he said.

Joe yawned again and nodded.

"That guy's strong, an' some fighter, I'll say."

"I'm sick o' seein' him," Joe stated.

"D'you go t' the movies a lot?" the boy asked.

"Sure. Don't you?"

"No. There ain't no movies on the island."

"What island's that?"

"The Fist."

The announcing title of a picture was thrown upon the screen. Joe reached under the seat for his hat.

"I saw this," he said. "Guess I'll get out."

"Guess I'll go too," the lad said. "I saw it."

Outside in the dusk Joe lighted a cigarette and gave one to the boy, and they turned down the street together.

"Where's this Fist?" Joe asked.

"Just off the coast a way. I've been there pretty near a year."

"What doin'?"

"Fishin'."

"Fishin'!"

"Sure. D'you fish?"

"No. I farm."

"There's lots o' farmers on the island."

"Yuh?"

"They got lots o' cows."

"Yuh?"

After a brief silence the lad asked, "You lookin' f'r a job?"

"Yuh."

"You could get a job on the island, I guess. Ol' man Santos needs a hand."

"Any good?"

"I do' know. Santos is all right, I guess."

"When you goin' back?"

"I ain't goin' back. Had a fight with my boss."

"Yuh?"

"Sure. He got sick o' me an' I got sick o' him. We couldn't stand each other any longer. Y' see, in the winter he don't fish—just bums aroun' the house eatin' an' sleepin'. Sometimes he has a housekeeper, some dame he gets in t' feed him an' keep him company. This winter he didn't get no woman—took me into the shack t' live with him instead. I almost went crazy listenin' t' his bull and his snorin'. I'm glad t' be out o' there. I'll get a job all right!"

"What's the guy's name?"

"Vinti.'

"An' what's the other guy's—the farmer's?"

"Santos. Why don't you try for a job with him?"

"Maybe I will to-morrah. What's your name?"

"Angelo—Angelo Vieira."

They drifted into talk of other matters. Later they had supper together, went to another movie, hired a room, and slept like brothers in the same bed that night.

The next day, following Angelo's directions, Joe came to the Fist. It was a cold morning. The sunlight lay clear on the earth, brilliant but without warmth. The wind came off the water with a whipping gaiety, invigorating and heady. As Joe waited for the ferry, he leaned over the railing of the little wooden pier. Before him lay a spread of blue water with white-tipped waves rolling in the sunlight. Beyond, the island stretched, north and south, a long low barrier with the

Fist bulking high against the sky. Beyond the island, he knew, moved the mysterious empty sea.

Joe tried to imagine what life on the island might be like. The place looked lifeless. Nothing, he thought vaguely, could ever happen to him there. It would be as dead as the Vermont farm. He smiled at himself—waiting for a boat to take him over to all that deadness. Yet he sensed faintly, with some antennæ of intuition, that he was going forward to meet something, and he wondered vaguely what it might be. He supposed it might be some good thing; he put aside all thought that it might be any bad thing; of course there would be women in it—or perhaps one particular woman.

The little boat drew in at last, and he went aboard. Later he walked out over the bright windy road to the Fist. As he rose out of the marshland the little community of the Portuguese lay before him—the shabby houses and shacks, with henneries and piggeries behind them.

In the road, where the sunlight fell and the wind was still, three women stood talking, each one of them the side of an irregular triangle. The one whose back was turned to Joe was an old woman, as he could see from the way the curves of her broad figure sagged and fell together. Her dress, a faded garment, was divided in a horizontal curve, somewhat above the middle of its length, by the equator of an invisible apron-string. About her head she wore a rusty green plaid shawl. Her feet were planted wide apart; her left hand nuzzled into her plump hip. She was a married woman; she was the Stout Gossip.

Her companion on the left was the Washed-Out Gossip, a creature spare of stature, vague of countenance, and of a personal colourlessness amounting almost to invisibility. She was a widow, and to save herself from the annihilation of ultimate insignificance she went always clothed in shabby black. She stood now, silently gazing into the face of the woman who was speaking, apparently absorbing information like some extraordinary genus of sponge. Actually, information passed through her consciousness without impediment, and only a very few items—facts so definite as to have no fluidity—became imbedded in her brain.

The third woman was tall and spare to emaciation. She was the Thin Gossip, the oldest spinster on the island. She had a harried appearance, as if run to the verge of extinction by an insatiable curiosity. Her clothes were old-fashioned and ludicrous, but one was arrested by her face. Her eyes were large and dark and brilliant, her mouth and nose were strong. The animation of youth still lingered in her, but it had become acidulous in quality.

The Gossips were discussing the meagre news of the place. The Spinster was talking of Giorgio Vinti's quarrel with his boy—Angelo. Suddenly she paused in the middle of a sentence and gazed down the road.

So intense was her gaze, the Stout Gossip and the Washed-out Gossip both turned and looked with keen curiosity at the young fellow who was approaching. Joe was abashed by the intensity of their regard and passed them by with as great a show of unconcern as possible. Like smoothly swinging swivels they slowly turned as he

passed along, keeping him always in the centre of their field of vision.

At the second house several children were playing on the steps. They, too, paused and gazed at him with round eyes. As he approached, a small girl called to him a bold "Hello." Joe smiled and stopped. "Hello, everyone," he said. "Tell me—where does ol' man Santos live?"

The children pointed to the base of the Fist, vieing with one another in the shouted exhibition of their local knowledge.

"Good!" Joe cried, picking his information out of the treble tumult. "I'll find the place." Then he went along the road again surrounded and pursued by the calls of the children.

Half an hour later old man Santos lent Joe a pair of overalls and put him to work, milking and feeding the cows.

When the last chore had been done for the day the old fellow heaved a sigh of contentment—his new man was a good man. "I c'n only hold on t' him!" he said to his wife. "If I c'n only make him stay!"

Joe was tired, but he had gone out for a stroll in the great darkness. As he looked up at the stars and listened to the voices of the sea, a strange content settled about him—as if he had found at last something that he had been looking for, as if he had come home after long wanderings. Something rose out of the earth, silent and strong, and filled him with peace. The past was gone; New York seemed very far away, both in time and space. It was as if he had escaped from something;

but there was nothing for him to escape from, he knew—no brightness, no darkness, of good or bad, no high light of any sort in his uneventful past of sufficient importance to cast a shadow.

Nevertheless, the present seemed to hold a quiet promise. Somewhere in the distance a bell-buoy rolled slowly on the winter sea; its tolling touched his ear, melancholy and vaguely sad. He stood in the cold, listening—hearing the wind go purring by, the sea in irregular rhythms, the bell faintly mourning—and suddenly a surge of elation swelled in his breast. He wanted to laugh, wanted to shout—for no reason that he could think of.

He turned back toward the house at last, and as he did so a voice came to him out of the sky, out of the night—the clear rich tones of a man's voice singing. It was somehow mysterious in that wide emptiness. About him was the immensity of the universe—sea and land and starry sky—and that clear voice, the symbol of all the hopes and fears, the dreams and loves and agonies of humanity.

III

It was after mass on his first Sunday on the island that Joe encountered the community. The little house of God was filled with a dead gloom, its cold sombreness intensified by two chilly points of candlelight on the altar. The benediction was pronounced and the congregation knelt as Father Pasquale—a gentle little man—bore the Host reverently from the sanctuary. Then the people crowded out into the windy sunlight.

Half a dozen young fellows gathered before the door in a careless group, smoking cigarettes and watching the women pass, smiling as some spoke to them, calling to others who failed to noticed their presence.

Joe joined this group and lighted a cigarette. He was aware of many eyes upon him; he had the feeling that these people had already heard about him and were gazing now to see what manner of man he was. He turned and looked out across the bay, and thought of the city he had left a few days ago, with its white Capitol on a hill; dreamed thus a few minutes, mentally isolated from the movement about him.

"Hello, Rosie," he heard a youth behind him say; then two others called cheerily, "Hello, Angela!"

He turned and faced the thinning assemblage. Groups of three or four stood here and there about the grey, weather-beaten chapel, discussing, some eagerly, some

casually, the past and the future in a jumble of generalities.

As Joe turned he caught a glimpse of a young woman's eyes upon him. She was tall and vigorous of body, simply dressed, with a good-looking face and dark eyes that seemed capable of seeing all things clearly. As he looked at her she turned away, unhurried and without embarrassment, and proceeded down the narrow road alone. But almost immediately a younger girl followed and called to her. The tall one paused and turned, encountering Joe's eyes again as her look swung in a long arc to greet her friend.

"Who's that girl?" Joe asked young Rosario, whom he had already met on the beach.

"The tall girl? That's my sister Rosie."

"Yuh?" Joe said indifferently. "Who's the other?"

"Oh! Angela Grania—a peach!"

Joe smiled.

And then his eyes were caught by a white flutter at his feet. He stooped and picked the fluttering thing from the ground—a little white cotton handkerchief with a pink border.

Erect again, he saw that the girl Angela was coming back toward the group; and, grasping the fact that the handkerchief belonged to her, he stepped forward and met her as she approached.

"This yours?" he asked, holding out the bit of white cotton.

"Yes," she said, reaching her bare hand forward and taking it. "Thanks. The wind whipped it right away from me."

Joe lifted his cap and smiled automatically into her

smiling eyes. As she finished speaking he flapped his cap upon his head again and watched her move away.

He was aware that Rosie Rosario had waited for her friend and had watched him as he performed his little act of gallantry. Now her eyes held a pleasant light—for him; not a light of amusement, but a light of interest and appreciative appraisal.

Joe turned back to the group of young fellows, a little confused, and noted their collective bantering smile. He took his place among them and tried to hide his self-consciousness. No one spoke.

"Well," Joe said at last, "I got t' work!"

"Me too," Rosario chimed in.

They moved off together; the group disintegrated and dispersed. A short distance down the road Joe overtook Santos and his wife on their homeward way, and waving his hand absentmindedly to Rosario, he walked along with them.

There were several unusual phases of that little episode of the handkerchief. In the first place, handkerchiefs were not commonly used by the ladies of the Fist; but Angela Grania had spent a portion of her youth in the small country school that stood two miles up the road toward Melton (one of the mixed blessings that the Portuguese accepted in this strange land of prosperity), and among other things she had there acquired the ability to carry a handkerchief without too great ostentation. It was one of the items of her "dressing-up"; she always carried it when she went to church.

And a young man tipping his hat was an extraordinary sight at the Fist—it was not often done except for

Father Pasquale. With women the young men were usually familiar merely. The act had irrevocably marked Joe as an outsider, a man of the world, a sort of dandy. It roused the secret admiration and envy of his audience—it was the index to so many vague and splendid things—all that one might conceive metropolitan life and experience to mean.

The Gossips were occupied with a new dramatic theme, a theme that offered innumerable possibilities of interpretation and development.

But the principals—Joe and Angela—were unable to look at the occurrence objectively. Heretofore—especially since his sojourn in New York—girls in the mass had had no secrets from Joe. In the realm of morals he had nothing to boast of but a shallow, crude cynicism. Because his interest in women was not profound it had always been easy enough to judge most of them according to his negative code, simple enough to "size them up" and catalogue them with sufficient exactness.

Now, for the first time in his life, his code had failed to apply. Here was a girl so splendid as to be unknown to his experience. He was moved in a manner that he could not understand. Being outside his experience, she was wonderful, stirring his curiosity and his interest. He could pronounce no judgment on her whatever, because he felt that any attempt to put into phrases what she seemed to him to be would result in an amazed dumbness. He did not attempt it; his egotism withdrew from the attempt and wrapped itself in contemplation of the vision of her as in a delicious, luminous silence—a silence dominating his physical being, his men-

tality, sending him about his work in a lethargy of preoccupation.

The other girl—Rosie Rosario—he understood well enough whenever he remembered the glances of her splendid eyes, and he catalogued her promptly, as an expert, sure of the characteristics of his specimen. From time to time a beam of remembered light from Rosie's eyes penetrated the luminous haze in which his being was immersed, rousing his mind to interest and stirring his physical inertia with a gentle thrill.

But always his faculties settled back into the stillness of contented wonder. Continually he saw a little bare brown hand extended toward him in a gesture of shy candour, and in his ears there lingered the memory of a wind-whipped voice whose words he could not recall.

And Angela, during the days that followed that encounter, lived in a land of faery. She was one of those daughters of the poor who come into the world and grow to maturity in a simplicity and ignorance amounting almost to unconsciousness. Nothing but the smallest details of routine existence ever came near her. She was naïve, without ambition, unread and superstitious, gentle and unaggressive. She was, too, physically lovely. Clearly, she was destined to marry and become the mother of children whom she would serve.

Now visions that had nothing to sustain them in the facts of the physical world added daily to her beauty. Never again would she gather from dreams such fresh, keen joy. Her body pulsed and glowed; she was like a clear flame burning in the island's desolation, untouched by frosts and winds. It was this still, bright

flame of vitality, even more than her youth and loveliness, that had attracted Joe on Sunday morning.

He had removed his cap—it all began with that. She had seen the black plume of his hair curled over his temple, had heard his voice that seemed so strange and wonderful, had noted the look of half-serious interest in his clear brown eyes. For a moment she had been uncomfortably conscious of the depth of that look—for a moment she had been disturbed, for life had not yet taken on intensity for her. Now, as the days went by, however, she recalled Joe's eyes as clearly as she could, clung to the significance of their expression, absorbed it as a strengthening emotional food. Day by day she grew in beauty, nourished by it; she beheld the material world about her in a golden vagueness.

Angela lived in a shabby house that faced the road from the east but stood far back in a wide bare yard. Behind the house a dilapidated barn leaned weakly in the wind. Southward from these buildings the land sloped gently down to the marshes in a gradual wide field lying for ever bare to sun and dew. This was Ramon Grania's garden; on this slope, too, stood his vineyard.

Ramon Grania, Angela's father, was a silent man who sat as a spectator in the theatre of life, watched with continued interest the weary plot of daily existence unfold before him, listened to the shabby actors speak their parts, accepted the judgments of the critics, and had very little to say about anything. Naturally a simple soul, he relied on his neighbours as the city man relies on his newspaper. He was an optimist, for, though

he had spent years in observing humdrum events, there lingered in his heart an unconscious hope that he would some time be present at the unfolding of an epic climactic and important.

On the Saturday morning following Angela's encounter with Joe, breakfast had been finished early, as usual, in the Grania house. Angela, in the kitchen, moved deftly from table to sink and stove and cupboard. The kettle of hot water for the dishes was singing on the stove.

Angela paused in the act of pushing a chair against the wall beneath the window, abandoned the motion uncompleted, and stood looking out over the dull landscape toward the sea. As she stood, absorbed in dreams, old man Santos' white horse and wagon emerged out of the mists of the morning and, half hidden by the dead reeds, crept slowly across the marshes. Nothing could have been more drear and forlorn than that black and white unit of life moving with the slowness of pain across the winter desolation. Angela's gaze followed it as it crawled wearily forward till, at last, it passed out of her range of vision. Then she smiled but did not stir, continued to stand there lost in dreams.

She was roused by the sound of her mother approaching along the hall, and she quickly turned to the warm, dingy kitchen—descended from the heights of fancy to the mundane matter of washing dishes.

Her mother burst into the room and cast a swift glance about. She was a wisp of a woman—small, thin, dark-skinned, old beyond her years. She moved swiftly always, for ever hurried by a nervous energy too intense for the body that contained and served it.

"What're you doin'?" she cried. "Get t' work, for God's sake, an' don't be standin' roun' like a fool! You an' th' ol' man'll drive me crazy! I can't do everything—in an' out. Clear that sink in a hurry—I got t' cook!"

She was gone—out the kitchen door, admitting a cold blast of reality as she went, and could be heard crossing the yard toward the barn, calling raucously, "Ramon! Ramon, you! Ramon!"

Angela proceeded at once with her work at the sink. Soon her mother, having given her commands at the barn, was back in the kitchen, gathering dishes and baking materials from closet and cupboard, and mixing her dough with a deft but breathless haste.

Angela escaped as soon as she could and went to her own little room down the hall. Alone, she began to dream again of an impossible world—a world at once serene and thrilling, filled with common tasks, but endlessly shining with love. To-morrow would be Sunday; she would see him again! Then, grown temporarily practical, she brought her best clothes out from her narrow cupboard—a dark-blue dress trimmed with cheap white lace; a brown felt hat with a green feather; her long brown coat; her white cotton gloves, which she placed conspicuously where she would be sure to remember to wash them.

Then she stood looking at herself in the stained mirror near the window. The examination filled her with satisfactions and despairs as she noted, in that reflection she knew so well, the things she was glad to see, the details she wished were different. On the whole, a healthy optimism ruled the inspection, for her vision

was lighted with the thrilling brightness that she had seen in the eyes of her lover.

Suddenly her heart stood still, every sense became alert. She listened in a pain of intensity to a voice that came singing along the road—a loud, clear, joyful voice that swelled above the rumble of a dump-cart.

Joe!

As Angela listened her heart began to race, the blood pounded in her ears, half drowning the cadence of the song, her face became like a flame. She stole to the window and watched the cart creep out across the marshes. Scattered notes came faintly back upon the wind, and each one stabbed her like a sword—deep throbbing wounds piercing her bosom with pain that was more than half delight. She bit her lips to still the surging of her passion; then, with a little gasping cry, she fell upon her knees beside the dingy bed and hid her burning face in her arms. Her body trembled. She was ashamed of her emotion, yet she was mysteriously happy under its sweeping tumult, and she trembled with intensity while still that manly music echoed in her ears.

But at last she grew calm. She raised her head and poised erect upon her knees, staring at the pictured Madonna who, from the security of her gilded frame, stared passively down upon the girl's emotion. The last remnant of the storm swept over Angela as she looked. Her hands clenched upon the bed, her arms went tense, and throwing back her head, she whispered fiercely to the calm-faced Virgin, "I love him! I love him! I love him!"

"Angela! Say! You sleepin' there? Go get this broom an' sweep!"

The shriek of her mother's voice startled the girl. She jumped to her feet and went about her dreary tasks.

During the afternoon the wind rose in the north with a steady pressure, swirling the cold dry sand in delicate wreaths along the beaches and snapping frozen reeds in furrows across the marsh. The gaunt rheumatic trees were bent and twisted in one of Nature's osteopathic processes. The promontory of the Fist stood up to meet a storm. As the darkness settled, it began to snow.

All through the night the snow fell, at times quietly, covering the drab island as with a luminous blanket, at times swaying away before the wind in a curtain of sinuous texture that swept hissing into the sea. Toward morning the snow-fall ceased, and the day dawned over a transformed world. In the sunlight the land shone like a white flame in one's eyes; the sea was black, stretching away in limitless dreariness.

Very early Father Pasquale's bell sounded out from the foot of the Fist, and soon the slow silhouettes of men and women came wandering across the narrow wrist toward the chapel. The wind was keen and clear. One planted one's feet firmly and went as quickly as possible; but the wind impeded progress, pulling at one's clothes, pressing coats or skirts like sails against one's knees.

It was a physical relief to enter the house of God, for though it was cold there, it was still and the wind did not blow.

IV

Joe was the first of the young men to enter the chapel and take a seat on the young men's bench at the rear. Consequently he sat against the cold wall, and consequently, too, he was the last of the young men to leave after the service. His final prayer was a trifle longer than usual; he had to fumble a minute to find his cap; he paused to button his Mackinaw before going out into the wind—his fingers were slow with the cold. So it happened that just as he stepped into the aisle and turned toward the door Angela came along, and he found himself miraculously at her side.

She was pulling on a snowy glove with diligence, her eyes upon her occupation. When the sleeve of Joe's coat inadvertently touched her shoulder she looked up at him with calm unconscious eyes, all innocent of his proximity. But as soon as she saw him she smiled—an ingenuous smile—and he smiled back, with lively admiration in his eyes.

He held the chapel door while she passed out, and watched her face while the sunlight set true colours in her cheeks and lips and eyes. He tossed his cap on his head and whispered laughingly, "Hold tight t' your han'kerchief this mornin'!" She made no answer, but he saw the colour deepen in her cheeks. She half closed her eyes against the glare of the sunlit snow and the stares of the people huddled about the churchyard; and

together they paced along, running the gantlet of those questioning eyes.

"I guess you find it pretty cold here on the island, huh?" Angela said at last.

Joe shrugged. "I don't mind," he said. "Do you?"

"Oh, I'm use' to it."

"The wind, though—I don't like so much wind blowin'."

She laughed with delight at the sound of his voice, and he, encouraged, continued, "It's like a hurricane."

"Yes," she agreed, "even in summer."

There was a pause in the dialogue. At last Joe asked, "You mind me walkin' off with you like this?"

She made no reply, but laughed and looked at him archly, as if to chide him for his affectation.

"You lived here all your life?" he tried.

"Yes." Then, hesitantly, she said, "It ain't much like N'York, I guess."

"No, N'York's different," he agreed.

"You like the Fist?" she asked.

"That's what Santos asked me yesterday. Sure. I like it all right."

"You met Father Pasquale yet?"

"No."

"He's a good man," Angela said devoutly, "an' he loves us island people."

Joe contemplated her serious eyes. "I don't blame him," he said.

She understood him; they laughed as they went on together.

These tattered interchanges were meaningless in themselves; but the great god Convention ruled over the

Fist as over the rest of the world, and this chatter was a responsive litany which Angela and Joe said together in his honour, that the god might not be moved to wrath against them. It was a service of hypocrisy; for, more than anything else, Joe wanted to take Angela in his arms, without words and without laughter, to hold her body close while his soul emerged to seek hers. And, more than anything else, Angela's blossoming womanhood yearned to have him hold her so. But the great god Convention must not be forgotten; so they wasted their spirit in a pretence, waiting till their time should come.

"That your house?" Joe asked as they approached it. He already knew where she lived.

She nodded, glad that the place looked tidy under the shining snow.

They stopped.

"Well," Joe said, "I got t' get back an' go t' work. You goin' t' do anything this afternoon?"

"No." The blood rose into Angela's cheeks again. He was going to propose something—something that would turn their present casual acquaintance into a relation substantial and important.

"I'd like t' go up to the top o' the Fist," he said. "Would you go too, an' show me the way?"

She looked back to where the curving rim of the Fist rose clear against the sky. "Yes," she said. "I'll go."

"About three o'clock?"

"All right."

"Good-bye," he said. He took off his cap and turned away, and she turned toward the house, filled with gaiety, elated.

Two roads ran from the base of the Fist, rising and curving along the rim of the promontory till they met at the top in a small grassy plain. Above this windy level of grass several ledges of rock—the very strength of the cliff's substance—thrust up through the thin soil and spread their narrow platforms at varying levels, like tiers of seats where gods might sit to order the processes of earth and sea and sky. To avoid this outcropping of ledge the two roads curved inward and downward at the centre, so that their complete outline resembled the conventionalized heart on a lover's valentine.

This afternoon the roadways were obliterated by the snow, and the whole smooth plane of the cliff's incline shone like a silver shield. Joe and Angela took the right-hand way of ascent, kicking the dry snow into swirls that the wind swept to destruction over the rim of the cliff.

Below, at a convenient window in the settlement, the three Gossips sat watching their progress across the windy brightness. Through many years the Gossips had watched countless insignificant tragedies and comedies, had seen the young grow old, loves fade, passions die; but they now looked without cynicism upon the winter idyll enacting before them.

"They're young," the Married Woman said.

"Too young t' be anything but fools," the Spinster retorted.

"We ain't young, but still we're fools," murmured the Widow.

"Well, there's some fool things we don't do any more," the Married One said complacently.

"That's because we're old; not because we're sensible," the Spinster remarked.

"D'you suppose he loves her?" the Washed-out Widow asked wistfully.

"Sure he does!" the Thin One answered. "Look at 'em—in broad daylight!"

"Yes, look at 'em!" the Fat Gossip said. "They ain't ashamed of each other or what they're doin'."

"No, they ain't ashamed."

"Look at 'em now!" the Fat One exclaimed, pointing.

Joe and Angela had mounted to the highest point of the plain and stood, silhouetted against the bright blue heavens, looking out over empty space to the long, lonely line of cleavage between the sea and the sky. They were silent. Strange sensations stirred in Joe. Some mysterious power, entering through his eyes, groped in the hidden places of his soul and strove to drag out into expression something there that was ready to give voice. He wanted to cry out, humbly—in praise, in acknowledgment, in adoration; but his mind, incapable of understanding, incapable of finding phrases to express this strange emotion, balked at incoherence and left him dumb.

"I'd like t' look over the edge," Angela said at last, rousing from a reverie and looking into his face.

He stirred then, looked down at her, and smiled.

"Come on," he said, "I'll hold you safe."

"Wait!"

She turned and rolled a snowball in her bare hands and then, moving toward the rim, she reached her left hand backward to him. He took a firm grip on her

wrist and she swayed slowly out over space. With a light upward swing of her right hand she tossed the snowball over the edge. She was silent a minute, watching it plunge toward oblivion.

"Plump!" she exclaimed. The snowball had disappeared.

She laughed and he drew her back, drew her toward him, drew her into his arms. With her hands on his breast she looked up into his strange, dreamy face.

"Let me kiss you, Angela?" he asked.

"Are you honest?" she whispered.

"Oh, yes! Yes! You're not like other girls. I love you, Angel. I want t' love you—let me kiss you, Angel."

He bent over her and she raised her face to meet his lips. The moment they had waited for had come. The great god Convention was forgotten. Joe held Angela close and kissed her again—exposed upon a pinnacle before the world.

And then again, intensified to poignancy, that strange deep need to cry out—to acknowledge his affinity with, his dependence upon some vaguely sensed sublime and elemental power—moved him almost to tears.

"Oh, God! God!" he whispered.

He crushed Angela close, kissed her again in an intensity of devotion, and let her go. They stood in silence, side by side, at the brink of the cliff as at the brink of life, looking out across the lonely, passive sea. He put his arm about her shoulder and she rested her head against him.

"Remember," he said, "I'm goin' t' call you Angel."

She looked up at him and smiled her approval; then they were quiet again.

"I got t' go back," he said at last.

"All right."

They started down by way of the westward road. From time to time Joe paused to throw snowballs into the face of the descending sun. They stood and watched the missiles shoot out in long curves, miss their mark, and vanish in the waters of the bay. The snow-field about them grew faintly pink, while lengthening shadows crept from behind each mound and drift.

V

THE Rosarios lived in one of the shabby two-story houses that lined the bay side of the road. The father, one son —Manuel—and Rosie still maintained the house; the mother was dead, and other children had married and gone to live on the mainland.

Rosie Rosario had never married. She had never had the chance, for she was possessed by a temper amounting to madness, a rage that no man could stand. As a young girl she had been as adventurous as any boy, she had consorted with the boys of her age, sharing their games and escapades, learning their secrets and acquiring their point of view. In those days she had often battled with them, driving them amazed before her fury, cursing meanwhile with ardour and brilliance, like one verily possessed of a devil.

In consequence, all these boys, embryo husbands, knew her furies, and though as she grew in maidenhood she withdrew from their company and dissembled her rage, they all passed her by in the marriage market and chose for wives other women, less capable, perhaps, but less inclined to wrath.

Rosie was now twenty-six, a number that spells "old maid" in this island community of early marriages. Hers was a somewhat shameful status, implying some fundamental disability, and her neighbours treated her, accord-

ing to their temperaments, with supercilious gaiety or distant contempt. But none of them knew her status as well as Rosie knew it herself. Consciousness of her failure in life had ground itself into her soul, had gradually transmuted the wildness of her fury into the stillness of despair, and would later transmute her despair into a cold hatred of the world.

Rosie was made to work, to love, to hate, to live vigorously. The tides of life flowed strong and deep in her. As the wrath of her youth had expressed itself in wildest fury, so every other emotion that she felt found the extremity of expression. When her sexual passions took fire (as they had on occasions in the past), the heat and flame swept like a forest conflagration—swift, insatiable, uncontrollable, till they burned themselves out, marking the girl and the companion of her passion with the deep scars of life too swiftly spent.

When she saw Joe after mass on his first Sunday on the island, a faint breeze of desire blew the embers of her passive passions into a glow. Though he was no psychologist, Joe recognized this glow in the brief glimpse he had of her eyes; and though he was no physiognomist, he noted the scars of ancient fires upon her face. A swift brightness of recognition lighted his own glance, and Rosie, catching that spontaneous answer to her unconscious signal, felt the glow of passion in her bosom spread and brighten and leap into little wisps of flame. They understood each other without a word—temporarily.

But during the following week Joe's aspect was completely changed for the girl by the alchemy of her contemplation. Looking deep, she had seen as the recent years went by that a good man is like a pocket of ore in

a mountain—his love and ideals, like precious metals, mixed and scattered in the slag and waste that are also normally there; and for more than anything else she had come to long for the gold of a decent love, had come to desire, with the ardour of the desperate, the peace and pride and assurance that such love brings to a woman. She came to see Joe as the possible bearer of this peace and pride and assurance for her. He was an outsider—he could not know her old-time wrath or her past in any of its aspects. She might win the slag and the gold of him together, might hold them in her arms and in her heart. She was filled with a new ambition.

But when, on the following Sunday, she saw Joe's eyes so gently, so caressingly fixed upon Angela's face, her mood changed again—changed swiftly; the light died in her eyes, despair came flooding back into her soul.

More than once in the past Rosie had seen a man turn away with a smile, leaving her standing by the slag-heap of his passions and her own, and carry the preserved precious metal of his love to another woman. In Joe's meaning looks she now sensed his proposal that together they build a new slag-heap; and at once the physical contact with his handsome young strength (which had at first thrilled her senses and her imagination) took on the aspect of a wasting adventure on a bitter sea, a dull futility. She felt a pitiless cruelty in his proposal—it was a thing so different from what her heart desired. She was more hopelessly than ever aware of her failure as a woman.

Under all these shifting emotional winds Rosie went calmly about her duties, keeping the house of her father in order, serving him and her brother Manuel.

Manuel had been named after the last king of Portugal

—not because any particular loyalty for his native land lingered in the older Rosario's heart, but because he was impelled to express his delight that this last child of his vigour should be a son. It was a thing he had scarcely hoped for, and he marked the child with the highest sign of approval he could think of. He was always lenient with the boy, generous with him, hopeful for him without knowing what it was he hoped. Manuel stirred the only tenderness his father ever felt; he was the one thing in the world that the man loved.

Bland, careless, egotistic, Manuel did his work about the place without question, because work was the custom of the community; but in all other matters he went his own way, regardless of laws. He managed to contrive numerous excursions into forbidden realms of excitement, and for a young man of limited opportunities he knew a great deal about certain sections of the mainland of questionable reputation.

Though there was a space of only eight years between their ages, Rosie and Manuel were a generation apart in thought. During Rosie's life the modern woman had come into her freedom, but the girl's ideas had been definitely fixed on the patterns of the past. Life had generally become freer; with every reticence, restriction and reserve that woman abandoned, man abandoned some formality, reserve or consideration. The changed condition had become a fact, but Rosie did not understand it. Manuel, however, without thinking about it, grew up to understand the change with sufficient clearness to take advantage of it for his own ends.

Her brother was, consequently, a source of envy to Rosie. She envied him his easy views of life, his freedom

of movement, his facility of escape from the conditions of life which they both hated. She sometimes spoke to him of her envy, seeking his sympathy, but rousing only his contempt.

"I wish I could go off like you," she remarked once.

"Where d'you want t' go?" he asked, smiling.

"I do' know," she said. "Anywhere. I'd never stop!"

"Why don't you go?" he asked. It was half a sneer, for he knew how she was tied to the house, knew her lack of any other experience. Rosie looked at him with a faint disappointment, observing his lack of sympathy.

"Say, Rosie, you make me sick!" he exclaimed, grown suddenly serious. "You stay here wishin'. What's the good o' wishin'? Wishin' won't get you nothin'. Why don't you go?"

"How can I, Manuel?"

"You can work, can't you? Well, then, what're you afraid of? This place is fierce! An' it'll never change. If you want anything you got t' go out an' get it. It'll never come t' you at the Fist."

"What can I do?" she asked.

"You got t' work, but you wouldn't have t' work harder than you do here, an' you'd get more for it."

After a pause he continued, "I'm goin' t' get out in the spring. I can't stand any more o' this. Don't you say nothin'!"

"Where you goin'?" she asked.

"I do' know yet. N'York, I guess. But you won't go; you're afraid." He spoke disdainfully.

"I guess I am," she admitted, depressed at the thought of his projected escape.

He caught and held her eyes a moment as he stood in

the doorway on his way out. He was smiling significantly and his hat was set at a rakish angle on his head. He let his eyes move deliberately over his sister's body and return to her face, as she stood watching him.

"Well, you needn't be scared!" he remarked, still smiling; then he closed the door and was gone.

Rosie watched him cross the yard to the little greenhouse—young, careless, debonair. Her face was flushed and her soul was sickened at his suggestion. Every man she met seemed ready to drag her away from her dream of married decency; even her brother reminded her of possibilities which she wanted to forget. She became conscious of the sex-brutality of men. She knew that she could not leave the Fist because that brutality would destroy for ever her high ambition. Manuel might go away into the world, because he would there be the dominating brute; if she should go she saw that she would become the victim of the brutality of his kind.

VI

WINTER lay upon the island; the great face of the Fist was patched with snow; but February was now far advanced. A new quality moved in the winds that billowed across the waters like waves of an immense invisible sea. The spring was approaching, but still immeasurably far away.

The Portuguese settlement was busy with excitement. Broad women went visiting from house to house at unaccustomed hours, and gathered in groups in the roadway, with aprons over their heads, talking volubly.

Of all the women, the Gossips were the most calm. Soon after dinner they had taken up a position on the steps of the Married One's house, where the sun would shine all the afternoon, and there they held a sort of reception to the ladies of the community. They were sure of the arrival of their guests—sure of their audience.

Soon Mrs. Lemos came along the road, wheeling her daughter's baby in a carriage and carrying her daughter's older child—a little boy—on her arm. She wore a blue-checked apron over her cotton skirt, a red sweater over her waist, and on her head an old black felt hat, tied under her chin with a tape, against the wind. She was old and she came slowly, whispering to the child in her arms. As she approached the women seated on the doorstep, she paused and called out to them, "It's a good day!"

"It is a good day, Mrs. Lemos," the Widow responded.

Mrs. Lemos set the boy down from her arm, wheeled the shabby carriage sidewise to the steps, and sat down stiffly at the feet of the trio.

"It is good—the sun," she remarked, with a broad smile.

Nobody replied. The Gossips watched her, awaiting their moment.

"It is good for me an' good for the children," Mrs. Lemos went on.

"It's good for us all," the Fat Gossip said.

"To be sure!" the old woman agreed. "I get older every day an' I think only of myself an' my own." She smiled broadly again to assure them that she meant no offence. "I used t' be interested in things that happened all over the world," she went on, "but now I am not even interested in kings any more."

The others listened to her passively.

"Kings ain't what they use' t' be," Mrs. Lemos continued, half to herself. "Nothin' is the way it use' t' be. I am not myself the same."

The Thin Gossip smiled as she listened. Then she asked evenly, "Did you know that Giorgio Vinti is goin' t' be married?"

"Eh? What! God defend us!" Mrs. Lemos cried.

She lifted her hands in horrified astonishment.

"Married?" she asked after a minute. "Giorgio!"

The Gossips sat and laughed at the success of their coup. Here was a woman who thought a moment ago that the world held no interest for her, and now she was filling the winter air with her exclamations of amazement.

"It is a sin!" Mrs. Lemos went on. "Father Pasquale will never allow it! Who's he goin' t' marry?"

"Nobody knows. He don't know himself."

"Don't know!" cried Mrs. Lemos.

"No," the Fat Gossip volunteered; "but he's tired o' livin' alone, an' he's goin' t' find a wife."

"God pity the woman!"

"Don't you think he'll make a good husban'?" the Spinster asked.

"Good husband! I tell you it's a sin!"

"He's rich an' he's got a good business," the Fat Woman said.

"He is a beast!" Mrs. Lemos declared.

"Even so, he'll get a wife if he wants one," the Thin Gossip declared.

"He will, of course, God help us!" Mrs. Lemos agreed. "Women are fools!"

They were all quiet then for a few minutes, busy with their thoughts. At last the old woman asked:

"Is it true?"

The three nodded.

"I must go," Mrs. Lemos said rising. "I must tell Mary. It is a sin. Vinti is not fit to look at a woman!"

She called her grandson from his absorbing occupation of chasing an indignant red hen, and moved down the road, swiftly for her, toward the house of her daughter.

She had scarcely passed out of earshot when Rosie Rosario came to the door of her house, which was next to that of the Fat Gossip, to sweep the scarred and broken steps of the porch. She spoke to the Gossips casually and proceeded with her work. The appetite of

the three women had been whetted by their success with Mrs. Lemos; they were eager for more.

"Hi! Rosie! Did you hear the news?" the Fat Woman cried.

Rosie paused in her sweeping. "News?" she repeated.

The Fat One laughed. "Yes," she called back; "Vinti is lookin' for a wife."

It was clear from her eyes that Rosie was startled, as Mrs. Lemos had been. It took her a full minute to adjust her mind to the news; then she said, as if waking from a dream, "Vinti! A wife! He'll have an awful hard time!"

"Mrs. Lemos thinks p'raps it won't be so hard for him t' find one."

Rosie turned and watched Mrs. Lemos' short figure trotting down the road. She shook her head and resumed her sweeping. "I pity the woman," she said.

Of all the dwellings in the little Portuguese community, the most important was the house of Giorgio Vinti. There was no architectural fineness about it, no distinction. It was a small wooden shack of four rooms, battered and rusty, that stood at the top of a smooth sandy beach facing the bay. Its importance lay in the fact that it was the abode of the richest and proudest man in the place.

Giorgio was a fisherman. It was rumoured that his business amounted to twenty-five thousand dollars in a season. Of this amount, his profits were whatever one might care to say. His friends estimated the profits high, for it added to the prestige of their friendship; his ene-

mies underestimated his earnings, even to the point of suggesting losses.

Giorgio himself never said how much he made. In this, as in everything else, he was aloof, superior, kept his own counsel. The uncertainty about his business and its interest for the community rather piqued his pride; he liked to have the people talking about him. But his reputation was most interesting from another angle. Vinti was a libertine. For years he had lived in the small shack at the top of the beach, and there he had always had a housekeeper. The women came and went with such frequency that at times the community was scandalized.

As far back as the memory of Vinti went in the settlement, these women had been coming and going. Some of them stayed a month, some for years; some had been unbelievably good for such a companionship, others so gross it had been a wonder that even Vinti could stand them about. They all worked for him and kept the shabby shack in order, washing, cooking, and doing the work of a housekeeper; but there had been no illusion about them in the minds of Giorgio's neighbours.

During the past month, however, Vinti had been living alone. It was an abnormal state for him. He was watched by every woman and by most of the men in the surrounding grey houses; they wanted to observe him in the act of bringing home his next housekeeper. Nobody thought of interfering, but Vinti did all this business with such phlegm, with such brazen frankness, that his neighbours were alive to view the spectacle of his bravado. Though he had never had a mishap of a

notorious nature with any of his visitors, there was always the possibility of excitement. But it was a phase of Giorgio's habitual good luck that in any case where one of the women was dissatisfied and wouldn't stay, nobody was ever aware of it till she had gone. Then rumours sprang up on all sides and the departed woman was either censured or pitied, according to the whim of the neighbourhood.

During all the winter now drawing to a close, Vinti had had no woman in his shack. Margherita, the last —a tall, spare woman with beautiful eyes—had died in the house in the autumn. Her memory had been blessed by the Gossips with pity and respect, for there had been depths of her personality that the people had never plumbed and therefore respected—a region of mystery and shadowed sorrow. Vinti had buried her with all the marks of respect that he would have shown to a wife, and turning away from that grave—the only grave he had ever made—he had murmured to himself, "No more! No more women!"

Then, as if to spite the interested watchfulness of his neighbours, he had taken one of the boys from his fishing-fleet to live with him in the shack. They cooked and slept and lived together through the long winter, lazy and friendly, both apparently satisfied with the arrangement.

There was little work to be done, and early in January both the boy and Vinti became tired of the monotonous inaction. At last they quarrelled—loudly, with curses, epithets and recriminations. Giorgio kicked the lad out incontinently, and he went over to the main-

land, found a job, and was happy. It was in the afternoon of his first day on the mainland that Joe met him in the motion-picture theatre.

Vinti, left behind, grew more and more miserable. For two or three weeks he kept house for himself, eating whenever he felt inclined, sleeping much of the time. Often, driven by discontent, he would go down to the boat-house and pull the traps and dories about, trying to find something to do, feeling imaginary premonitions of spring. But it was no use. He was very lonely, very much bored, disgusted with his life.

He never visited his neighbours, for in other men's houses he was not master, and where he was not master he was not happy. So he remained in his own four dirty rooms, watching the sea and listening to the wind until he nearly went mad. Then one day he turned away from the window where he had been looking out on a smother of waves piling up on the beach, and said to himself, "By God, I ought t' get married!"

The exclamation startled him. For a moment he was frightened. The thought had come up out of the depths of him; no such thought had ever risen out of those depths before. He wondered if he were going crazy there alone. Then for many days he mocked that wild idea, ridiculed himself and took the notion quite seriously by turns. But the idea had taken hold of his mind as with many tentacles. Every phase of his dreary existence re-echoed, again and again, that wild phrase, "I ought t' get married!"

At last, in a desperate scramble to save himself, he took his pocket-book and went over to the mainland to look for a housekeeper. Noting his absence, the

Gossips renewed their vigilance and awaited his return. At the end of a week he came back—alone.

He came with a jaded air, for in his heart Giorgio knew that he had somehow beaten himself, knew that he was done with housekeepers, knew that there was no escape from his impending fate, knew that he was going to be married. Yet he did not want to be married; he could not picture himself as a married man. More than anything else in life he valued his independence, his freedom, the pride of his untrammelled individuality.

Then he did an unprecedented thing—he sent a peremptory message to Mrs. Silvia to come and clean his house.

Mrs. Silvia was a widow who for an indefinite number of years had subsisted mainly on life's negatives and had grown frail in consequence. In the summer-time she still worked in the fields, gathering fruits and vegetables, and some of the farmers still employed her to help with the milking in the busy haying-weather. She was a faithful worker, according to her ability, but she was beaten thin by the hammers of existence, her self-reliance and independence were gone.

When Vinti sent for her she went to his house trembling under the importance of the rich man's command. And when she beheld the chaotic condition of those four rooms she trembled more, not knowing how to begin her work.

"Look at my house, Mrs. Silvia!" Vinti exclaimed. "Not fit for pigs! Clean it up, for God's sake! That boy was good for nothin'. Lazy, he was. Throw most of the junk out. We can buy more. Make it respec-

table, Mrs. Silvia. A man couldn't bring a wife to a place like this."

Mrs. Silvia tottered. Her equilibrium was completely unstabilized by Giorgio's large order, by the responsibility of the free hand he had given her—"Throw most of the junk out," he had said—and, finally, by his mention of a wife.

"Are you goin' t' bring a wife here, then?" she gasped, at last.

Giorgio laughed serenely. "I do' know," he replied. "I'll have t' find her first."

"That would be easy—for you," she said, with an ingratiating smile.

Giorgio disliked that smile. "Humph!" he ejaculated. "Not so easy! Women that's fit t' be wives is scarce, Mrs. Silvia. You ought t' know that, even."

The poor woman was properly rebuked; she said no more. Day after day she worked in the dirty house, piling in heaps the worthless things to be burned or thrown into the sea, if Giorgio approved. And Giorgio always approved. Finally she finished and reluctantly turned her back upon the very good meals of this most generous of men. He paid her well and sent her away as peremptorily as he had summoned her.

And, strangely, by that time all the neighbourhood knew that Giorgio Vinti was looking for a wife.

It was news of tremendous import. Nothing quite so stirring had ever before upset the little community. Friendly women began to observe each other with less friendliness. Confidences were curtailed. Mothers judged their daughters with a new standard of appraisement. Girls examined their lovers with more critical

eyes. Youths watched for any diminution in the warmth with which their caresses might be received. Giorgio Vinti had set a new value on nearly every inhabitant of the Fist.

Many of the women were filled with new egotism, new dreams and hopes and despairs. They examined themselves in mirrors and considered their clothes. During that week many of them found occasion to take a little trip into Melton, to buy a ribbon or a pair of gloves; some even went over to the mainland and spent a day in the shops. They had all—widow, maid and spinster—been passively ready to do their duty as the wife of some man, and here was the man most excellent—the man of money. Of course Giorgio's choice was as unpredictable as next summer's weather; but uncertainty is the food of hope, and not many women despaired.

A great strangeness grew up between Giorgio and the women. Girls who had heretofore chaffed with him without self-consciousness now assumed a new dignity in his presence—the reflection of their embarrassed uneasiness at the thought of him. And thereby many of them lost the thing they so eagerly desired. For Giorgio's was a broad nature. Nothing restrained attracted him. Not often in his experience had he found women who were too forward for his taste. In the past the grosser charms had been his delight; he had always preferred buxom creatures who were not afraid to laugh out and talk out and call a spade a spade.

VII

THROUGH all the excitement of those days—the plans, conjectures and chatter—Joe and Angela moved almost unaware, absorbed in their winter idyll.

Angela went about her household duties now dreaming less of love in the abstract and thinking more of Joe in particular; her first hopes had settled into a sort of assurance—a sort of faith—and she sang and was beautiful.

Joe was charmed by her beauty, lost in reverence for the mystical depth of spirit within her that was so fine, so tender, so appealing to his deepest instincts. This quality, completely feminine, seemed individual to her alone; its presence placed her in a cloudy region above sex, above humanity; it made her wonderful, mysterious; because of it her body seemed subtly etherealized. Joe hovered about her, physically and mentally, in a sort of half-conscious trance, submissive to her wishes, responsive to her moods. Life was opening to him new vistas of desire and ambition; he moved in a dreamy phase of development that was like a second puberty.

As often as he could, he hurried across the narrow wrist of land and snatched a few minutes with the girl under the windy stars. Sometimes during the day she would hear him singing in the road as he drove into Melton. She would hurry to the window then and they

would exchange smiles and gestures. On Sundays they strolled home together from church, and on Sunday afternoons they walked out across the marshes or found a sheltered spot on one of the beaches, where they sat and threw stones at some stick or old tin can that Joe would pick out of the drift and set up as a target.

They were completely happy together. Life passed them by, clear as a dream, unobstrusive.

Giorgio Vinti meant almost nothing to either of them. He was of no more importance than countless other shadowy people casually present about them in the world. Angela thought of him as old enough to be her father. At the news of his marriage she smiled with a distant amused curiosity.

"D' you hear about Giorgio?" she asked Joe.

"Vinti?"

"Yes. He's goin' t' be married."

"Oh, sure! I heard the boss talkin' about it."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, nothin' much. He don't like Vinti."

"No, some people don't. But he should worry! He can do what he likes."

"Yuh. An' he does, I guess. Ol' man Santos says what he likes is bad stuff."

"When I was little," Angela said, "Giorgio used t' give us rides home from school in his fish-cart. He'd be comin' home from Melton. An' he often had candy or little cakes in his pocket. I used t' like him."

"I don't like him," Joe declared. "He's a bluff an' a bully."

"Once, I remember, he gave me some Chinese nuts.

They had a funny taste. I liked 'em. I ain't ever seen any since."

"I guess," Joe said after a pause, "you like him yet."

"Yes," she answered frankly, laughing, "I like him. He's always jolly. But," she added, taking Joe's arm, "I wouldn't want t' marry him."

Joe gave her hand an appreciative pressure.

"Santos says if Vinti marries he'll drag his wife down t' hell, or she'll have t' save 'em both from the devil."

"I bet he'll be good t' his wife," Angela declared.

Joe made a gesture of unconcern, and they walked back to Angela's house. As they stood in the path, talking quietly, Angela's mother came to the door and called her in:

"Angela! You there? Come in here an' get t' bed!"

They said good night, and Joe wandered back across the wrist, wondering at Mrs. Grania's sharp manner.

Rosie Rosario's first reaction to the news of Vinti's search for a wife was a feeling of contempt—contempt for the man himself, who had spent his youth and the substance of his manhood wantonly and now expected some woman to condone the past and accept with thankfulness the remnant of himself that Giorgio offered, with his money. Her contempt flashed cold, like a steel blade, in thrust after thrust, at the women that she saw about her eagerly preparing themselves, agitatedly hoping to be chosen as the victim of the old man's faltering passions.

It was out of such emotions as this deep contempt that thoughts blossomed in the undeveloped intelligence of Rosie, and she was now swept by an abstract realization of the value of money. She saw vaguely that if one had

sufficient money, one could do whatever one pleased—could buy anything. In the light of her own poverty, this realization of the value of money made Rosie bitter. The more she thought of it—the more she realized the complete established power of money—the more bitter she felt. And here was Vinti, unfit to marry any decent woman, wholly desirable to the women about her because he had money.

Rosie's mind and emotions were wandering in a new realm of facts. She was picking up pieces here and there and fitting them into a new pattern of bitterness. Starting with an acceptance of the importance of money and an acknowledgment of her hatred of it, she came at last to see the importance of money to her personally. There she beheld in a flash the pattern of all her thought. It was not a pattern of despair, but a pattern of hope—the importance, the necessity of money *for her*. From this new basis her mind leaped into the realm of imagined things. With money she could have all that she desired—even a chosen husband, as Vinti was to have a chosen wife. Her inevitable question: How can I get the money? brought only one answer: Vinti's money! And though that at once killed half the beauty of her idea, limiting liberty and confining her dream to the realm of the actual, it was the only solution that appeared, the one chance, the great opportunity.

Rosie's emotion had pushed up into her mind, and her mind had evolved, a new basic law by which to judge the world. Her whole philosophy of life was at once shifted on to the foundation of a new thesis—the power of money. The great thing was to decide what one wanted and, having decided, to go ahead and acquire it.

One must, of course, pay something. Success, she perceived in a sudden inspiration, lay in clever bargaining with Fate. First one must get as much money as one could, giving as little for it as possible; then one must pay as little money as possible for everything else one wanted. It was a clear code. Its difficulty lay in finding opportunities to bargain—especially for the money.

But here at her hand was an opportunity waiting—Giorgio Vinti wanted a wife. Fate had come offering to bargain with Rosie. Her mind leaped; she would be the woman chosen.

She sat long that night and dreamed in her cold bedroom, where the roof slanted down and cut out a great segment of the squareness. Gone, for the present, was the black reality about her; she was lost in contemplation of the splendid things she would do when she should have Vinti's money at her back. At last she went to bed with chattering teeth, but serene in spirit, for the plan of her achievement was complete. She would propose for Vinti's money deliberately. She knew the man; he would appreciate frank dealing, and she would be frank.

She had seen that she must be different from the other women. She was no child. She would go to Vinti as a woman of the world and propose an arrangement that could be as clearly stated as any business proposition. And even though, in coming to an agreement, they might have difficulty over the actual terms, Giorgio could not fail to appreciate—even admire, perhaps—the manner of her approach.

On the following Sunday morning all the women at the Fist waited nervously for the wintry roll of Father Pas-

quale's bell. It came sounding at last, mildly summoning in itself, but stirring the nerves of the women like the last call to a star in a play that her cue has sounded and she must go on. And the women, like actresses, costumed and made up, moved out into the cold, dreary set, with the sea for back-drop and the Fist towering into the flies, and performed, each according to her inspiration, before Giorgo Vinti and the invisible gods.

Every woman had to pass Giorgio's house to get to the chapel. He stood at the window of his shack at the top of the beach, as in a reviewing-stand, and saw them pass—the faith and flower of the settlement. As they moved before his critical eyes he was scintillant with emotions, flashing and darkening like a summer sea. There were those over whom his eyes shone with appreciation or desire; there were others over whom he shook his head and was serious; at some he laughed outright in huge mockery; and at some he sneered in the manner of a superior. Some women waked no visible response in him at all. Once he laughed gaily and waved his hand.

When he had finished the review, which amounted to an inspection, he went and sat down with a sigh. Not one of the women he had seen had waked in him anything more substantial than a faint desire; and Giorgio knew that it would be folly to plan his married life on a basis of desire—it was sure to crumble and disappear.

Ah, he didn't want any of them, anyway. He didn't want to be married. No!

In the churchyard the Gossips had their own reviewing-stand from which they saw and noted each woman's badge of hope come fluttering on the wind. It was a pageant of

personalities visibly symbolized. Mary Ramos had new white gloves and new tan shoes. The older Furtado girl had acquired a new dark coat—green and very satisfying. Her sister displayed a new bright orange scarf that served to half hide her old coat. The Lemos girl—Mrs. Lemos' unmarried daughter—had had her hat gaily retrimmed. Mrs. Vargas, the widow, left her jacket open at the throat to display her new pink silk waist. The Papentello woman, whose past was a mystery, had purchased a brand-new dress, red and hot-looking, made with the shortest skirt that had ever appeared on the Fist. Others had new silk stockings, little bands of lace, bows and ornaments that mean so much to the costume-sense of women and nothing at all to men. Mrs. Souza wore a new blue hat trimmed with gay pink flowers, worried by the wind. Angela and Rosie came together into the churchyard. Neither of them wore a visible stitch of new clothes. As usual, Angela had on spotless white cotton gloves, her good brown coat and the hat with the green feather; Rosie's tan gloves were familiar to everyone, as her dark coat and her hat with the big bow of ribbon were familiar.

At sight of these two the Gossips exclaimed.

"Ah!" said the Fat One, non-committally.

"Oh!" said the Washed-out Widow, disappointed.

"Ah ha!" said the Thin One, in admiration of their cleverness and daring.

Then they all went in to mass.

Never had there been a more devout gathering of worshippers in the little chapel than on that Sunday morning. Father Pasquale, the good, innocent man, was touched and uplifted by the presence of so many of his

people and by the devotion with which they assisted at the service.

He had not yet heard of Vinti's quest.

Giorgio himself was not at the service. He never went to church—that was one of the things Father Pasquale charged to his soul as a failure. Yet they were friends —the priest and Giorgio—and the gruff fisherman was generous with his money for Father Pasquale's work.

It was ironic that Giorgio should be the cause of spiritually exalting the good priest; nevertheless it was he who had caused this splendid congregation to assemble in such humbleness of spirit. Every marriageable woman present had a fervent petition to offer that morning—a prayer in which she abased herself before the Most High and poured out her heart to the Blessed Virgin, repenting of past sins and promising future virtue in consideration for the present help of Heaven. Each woman's adherents —mother, aunts, incompetent sisters—prayed for her too. In their bid for a great and notorious success these women were enlisting, for themselves and for their candidates, all the strength they could get at, and the help of Heaven was not to be neglected.

Rosie sat at the end of a pew. As she looked about her during the service and noted the pitiful pains the other women had taken to fix themselves up for Giorgio's inspection, a light of triumph glowed in her eyes. She saw that they were all amateurs, provincial, unimaginative. She'd show these ninnies! Her scheme would work! The triumphant sense of her own clear vision grew till at last, when she sang the simple hymn to the Virgin, there rang in her voice a new resonance—the clear brave note of confidence.

There was but one supremely happy girl in all that windy waste—Angela. There was but one deeply happy lad—Joe. Their love-affair was passing from the stage of heart-interest to the stage of head-interest. Their first palpitations and excitements were over; they understood each other in a sort of vague intimacy; they had begun to plan the future.

Like all the other women, Angela had dressed in the best clothes she could find in her meagre wardrobe; but she had not dressed for Vinti. Joe waited for her, his eyes fixed upon the chapel door. When she came out she greeted him with a smile, and together they walked away, down the windy path. On the way Angela's mother passed them in the midst of a group of voluble matrons—spectators of the comedy; and so engrossed was the shrill, thin woman, she passed her daughter without seeing her. Later, however, as Joe and Angela stood before the house, the girl was summoned by her mother's querulous voice.

"Angela!" she called harshly. "Come in here an' help get the dinner, an' don't stand there all day, talkin' like a fool."

Angela looked at Joe.

"What makes her so cross?" he asked.

"I do' know," Angela said. "I guess maybe she don't feel good. She ain't very well."

"She don't like me," Joe suggested.

"She don't know you." Angela smiled. "I got t' go."

They arranged for a walk together in the afternoon, and Angela left him; Joe turned homeward, wondering how he could ever stand the sharp tongue of his mother-in-law-elect.

VIII

That Sunday was not a day of peace for Rosie. Hour after hour she went about her work in a fever of agitation; hopes and hesitations contended for dominion over her soul. At times she was overwhelmed by the risks of her venture; she was aware that in going to Vinti, as she planned, she was putting herself into his hands—chancing everything; and she knew, too, that if he found her proposal not to his liking, he would unhesitatingly shame her before the community. Yet her mind was obsessed by the plan she had conceived. Actually she was not afraid of shame—she had chanced it before without disaster. She came to hold the conviction of success to her bosom, both to create and to still the agitation that moved there in great waves and stopped her breath, as the waves on a summer beach roll up, smothering the happy bather and filling him with delight.

Darkness came early; though the days were lengthening, the evenings were long. Rosie grew weary of looking at the clock. But at last the supper was over, the dishes were washed. She stole off to her room. Then she stole quietly back again and went out into the windy darkness.

The night was dreary—an immense maelstrom of unhappiness, an inferno of unrest. Through the infinite, bleak spaces rose and echoed the sighs and sobs, the faint cries, the movements of an intense sorrow.

Rosie felt suddenly weary. She had a still sense of uselessness in her undertaking. Where was she going? What was it all for? What was it all worth? Then Giorgio's lighted window caught her eyes, and she seemed to rouse from a queer dream. That light was the answer to the foolish exclamations of her mind. Her senses cleared, her being became vital, she was sensitive to her finger-tips. The menace of the night withdrew before the keen thrust of her revived ambition. She was strong and filled with assurance. Her lips curled in a faint smile.

For a moment, as she passed around the corner of Vinti's shack, she stood in a pool of stillness. She seemed to have escaped from a turmoil into a calmness that unaccountably seemed safe. She raised her hand and straightened her hat, and then, with an automatic tensing of her body, she turned the corner of the shanty, plunged again into the windy sea of the night, and knocked at Giorgio Vinti's door.

She heard his responsive gruff call—"Come in!"—more like a challenge than an invitation. She pressed against the door, holding it close against her body, and entered.

The lamp flared in the gust she admitted, and she saw Vinti half rise out of his chair at sight of her. Great shadows were darting crazily on the wall behind him; for a moment her eyes were blinded by the wavering of the lamp-flame and by the tobacco-smoke that swirled like fog in the dingy room. She got her focus directly, however, and stood with her back to the door, looking at Vinti with flashing dark eyes. Through the smoke he gazed back at her non-committally with keen grey eyes,

and waited. He was sturdily built, broad and stocky. He sat at ease in a deep chair, unshaved, his grizzled hair in disorder, collarless, and with his shirt open at the neck, exposing his thick bull-throat. He appeared older than his years; he looked unclean and uncouth. Seeing him thus, one would have marvelled at this girl's choice of a husband.

"Well!" Rosie said at last. She said it with an accent of finality, as one says it who has just returned from a journey.

Giorgio seemed to accept her coming casually. "Hello, Rosie," he said. Then, after a moment, "Sit down."

She moved across the room and sat down by the cluttered table. "It's awful windy," she stated.

"Windy! I get it all down here. Seems 's if it'd blow the shack away sometimes."

Neither of them smiled. Rosie scarcely heard him; her mind was busy with her undertaking. Giorgio was really weary and, moreover, he didn't know how to proceed. He was waiting for Rosie to say what she had come for. A dozen notions of what that might be flashed through his mind, and underlying them all was a clear curiosity to know just what it was. Women did not often come to visit him.

At last Rosie looked up into his eyes, her own eyes bright, and a smile curved on her lips as she said, "I hear news of you, Giorgio."

"Me?"

"Yes. Is it true, what they're sayin'?"

"I do' know," he said, shrugging. "Prob'ly not. Most often it ain't."

"But this time? No?"

"Well . . ." He seemed to be considering.

"Don't you know if it's true?" she pressed, laughing.

"How can I tell? I don't even know what it is."

Rosie had a moment's wild fear. Perhaps what they were saying wasn't true. But she answered calmly, "They say you're lookin' f'r a wife."

"A wife, eh!" Giorgio chuckled to himself as if hugely amused, yet with an air of abstraction. "I don't have t' get married, Rosie, my girl."

"No. Most men don't, I guess."

"No. Most men don't have to."

"But they get married all the same."

"Fools!" he said. "It's the women's fault."

"The women's fault! It ain't a fault."

"It's worse'n a fault, it's foolishness; an' the women manage it."

He sat a bit higher in his chair and shifted his pipe.

"Now you're more sensible," he said. "You go alone."

"Yes," she agreed, "an' I find it slow goin'."

"Bah! Nonsense! You c'n travel faster alone—faster an' farther."

"It's no good, though, no matter how far you go. I'm tired of it, an' the farther I go, the tireder I get."

Giorgio raised his eyebrows. "No good? Don't you believe it! You know better. Alone you don't need t' miss a thing—an' you don't need t' be always alone. Hitched, you're hitched, an' you've got t' miss a lot. Don't you go thinkin' o' gettin' married, Rosie."

"It's time t' think of it," she declared.

"It's never time."

"It's time for me t' do it, too."

Giorgio shrugged. "Well, it's up t' you," he said.

"It's time for you, too," she retorted.

He gave her a keen glance. "P'raps," he said. "But I'd have t' think of it a long time first. Who're you goin' t' marry, Rosie?"

"That's what I come t' talk t' you about."

"Yes?"

"Yes. Is it true that you're lookin' for a wife?"

Giorgio understood her. He studied her closely through the tobacco-smoke. Then he said gruffly, "What ails you, girl? Get that notion out o' your head as quick as you can. What would I do with a wife, in God's name? Life's too short an' the world's too wide for a man t' tie himself to a post. If I'd been the marryin' kind I'd ha' found my woman long ago. As for me an' you, Rosie, we'd be cuttin' each other's throats before the clock struck. I'm no saint, my girl!"

"I know. But women don't want t' marry saints."

"Funny! Men do," he said meaningly.

"Listen," Rosie insisted. "I want a husband, an' I want one that amounts t' somethin'. You want a wife, an' you need more'n a pretty face. I've got brains an' I can work . . ."

He held up his hand, interrupting her. "I don't need more brains in this house," he said. "I got brains enough; an' I can do the work, too. You don't know how much a lonely man thinks of a pretty young face, Rosie. Men want t' marry saints, as I said, but they like the pretty faces too. They like the pretty faces at home, an' they like 'em away from home. Men can't work all the time—they like t' play too. They can't help that; it's in 'em t' play. Eh, Rosie?"

On Giorgio's face there glimmered the grimace of a

satyr. He laid his pipe on the table and pulled himself into a more shapely attitude. He was warming to a new idea.

"What I need ain't a wife, but a housekeeper. What you need ain't a husband, Rosie, but a friend. What we both want is a friend, an' not a master."

Rosie understood with a flush that she was being rejected as an applicant for the post of Vinti's wife, but was being offered a position in his house on quite another plane.

"That's all right, Giorgio," she said; "you know where t' find your housekeepers an' friends, I guess. I thought you were goin' t' settle down into decency an' save your old age from shame. I ought to of known better."

"There, there, my girl! Don't you go off an' get hot. I ain't a beggar. I expect t' pay. Sit still an' let's get to the bottom o' this. An' don't talk so much about my old age. I ain't old! No, by God! Not yet!" he cried out, slapping his heavy thigh. "Let's look at this as a money matter," he proposed.

Rosie's head rang with the jumbled crowding of all her recent thoughts about money; but she now realized that in this attempt her theories were proving impractical. She shook her head and stood up. "Your money matters don't interest me," she said.

"No?" he asked cynically. "You won't listen, then?"

Rosie made no answer, but went toward the door.

"Wait!" His voice was heavy with the pressure of emotion he had brought upon himself. "You came here to-night like a bold thing. You took a chance when you came, an' now you've got t' pay. There's a quiet way that'll mean money in your stockin,' or there's the other

way—to-morrah they'll be talkin' about you out there. What they say may be true, or may not; but, either way, you'll have t' take it. You can save yourself an' have somethin' t' buy a trinket with besides, if you'll listen t' reason; but you'll have t' make your choice, now you're here."

Giorgio's eyes flamed with dots of hot light as he looked at her. Rosie's eyes were flaming too—flaming cold.

She laughed shortly. "D'you suppose I came without thinkin' what you might do, Giorgio?"

He let out a great burst of laughter. "By God!" he cried, "you've got the stuff in you. Why don't you be reasonable?"

They regarded each other in silence, measuring each other deeper than words could go.

"You've got the stuff in you," he repeated at last, "but it's not the stuff I want in a wife, ye see!"

"What stuff do you want in a wife, then?" she asked.

"Well, there's the pretty face—the young an' pretty face, an' there's the saint, as I said. But look, Rosie," he pronounced seriously, "I don't want any woman for a wife that'd marry me just for my money."

"So? Use your sense, Giorgio! Where's the woman that's goin' t' marry you for anything else? Listen: I come t' give everything I had for everything that bein' your wife'd bring me; but if I can't get it all, I don't want any of it. I'd like t' have my hands on your money, all right; an' if I could get my hands on your money I'd pay what it might cost me. But don't you make any mistake about me or any other woman—whoever you get for a wife'll have her eyes on your money an' not on you. No, she'll have t' shut her eyes

t' you, Giorgio. You're old. The best part o' you is in the bank. If it wasn't for your money no woman'd look at you; an' you know it."

She turned and went out, admitting a great wind that seemed like the blast of her indignation. Vinti stood gazing after her, amazed at her boldness, furious at what she had said.

Out in the night Rosie was convulsed with a horror of existence. Her recent ambition seemed ridiculous, her recent hope absurd. Self-confidence and courage crumpled, and she was suddenly face to face with the chimera of the future—the stark emptiness of years that stretched away in every direction, endless but for the sharp horizon of a gaunt encircling fear.

The wind dragged at her clothes as if to drag her down. In her ears was the moan of the night. She could feel tears running down her cheeks; she was filled with self-pity. Her failure with Giorgio was proof of her insignificance. She had been a fool to chance that encounter; she ought to have known. She realized at once that she had known. All her arguments about money, her grand theory of paying for what one wanted, were like the imaginings of a child.

At last she halted in weariness of spirit and sank down on the beach, shaken with sobs, trembling as with cold. She clasped her face in her hands; the bitter tears of defeat fell between her fingers and were drunk by the sands that drank so much bitterness from the sea. Life for her was a lost cause, destined to failure from her birth through its own inherent deficiencies. Her mind went back over the past—the past empty of all but work,

small hatreds and small passions. Even her affairs of love, the moments in which she had been most conscious of power, seemed to her now like barbaric skirmishes leading to this final defeat—ill-planned moves in a paltry life.

She rose at last. Before her spread an immense sombreness of time; about her hung the infinite, pitiless universe. Tears no longer ran down her cheeks, but her body was shaken by sobs. The sand had been whipping into her hair and face and clothes. She was very weary, worn out, empty. But the bitterness of her tears had entered into her heart, tainted her blood; she turned homeward through the darkness of the night and the darkness of the years, with that new sharp bitterness in her soul.

IX

Rosie's visit roused Vinti as from a dream. Like a hibernating bear, he had been idle all winter in his shack. He was a man of few needs and those needs had been satisfied. The affairs of the world and of his neighbours had not interested him. The forces in him that made him a sensualist had been sleeping.

As Rosie left him he leaped to his feet; he stood in the middle of the floor for a minute while his passions cooled and his thoughts cleared. Then he went over and looked at himself in the bit of cracked mirror that he kept, but seldom used. The creature that he saw glaring back at him filled him with a strange awe. "What you been doin'?" he said to the reflection before him. "What ails you?"

What had he been doing? What did it mean—this long inaction? Was he losing his grip? Was he growing old? Ha! No! He knew that he was still all there! His body was sound and, subtly rising within him, he could feel the old passionate desires swaying, surging, sweeping through him as the great spring-tides swept up against the cliff out there, grinding at the strong foundations of his being, shaping his life, carving his destiny.

He slapped his heavy thighs and pounded his swelling chest to reassure himself; stretched in all directions, ris-

ing on his toes, reaching, flinging out his arms, feeling the blood run free in sluggish channels.

This talk of marriage had made him restless.

He dropped into a chair and sat a long time thinking. He thought of the past—the work he had done, the money he had made, the women he had known—and though there were one or two of the women he wouldn't mind seeing again, his whole existence appeared, as he looked at it, like a waste. He had no one of his blood anywhere in the world to turn to; he suddenly felt lonely, weary. Something whispered in him, asking for a sympathy that it dimly sensed the existence of but had never known. He grew quiet as he sat thinking. The passion and anger that Rosie had roused subsided. His mind stared, at last, at the fact of his ultimate extinction, and there stirred in him a repulsion, a kind of nausea, at the sensed obliteration of his ego. Something strong in his nature went tense to combat it.

Giorgio realized, in the vague manner of all men, that Nature must conquer him at last. He was only forty-six, yet he had not spared himself in those forty-six years. Fifty was approaching, and he thought of the age of fifty as a kind of barrier thrown across his days; life would then no longer be making him bright promises, but would begin to ask for his accounting, begin to take toll of his talents.

At last—finally, irrevocably—he made up his mind to be married. That was the only way in which he could save his life, his name, his memory, from oblivion. Yes, he would be married before it was too late. He turned deliberately to the matter of choosing a wife, and he unconsciously visualized the advent of a family—the strong

sons who were to perpetuate his name, the strength and pride it stood for.

He saw again the women of the community on their way to chapel that morning, passed them all in review before his mind and scrutinized them with the eyes of a connoisseur. He settled back in his chair; faint bodily stirrings, grunts, and grimaces of derision marked them as they passed. His strong instinct cried out for youth and beauty in the mate to be chosen, and he dismissed the women, one by one, until only Angela was left—young, strong and lovely. She was the only one of them all who would be worth what he would be worth to a wife, the only one of them all who had that morning waved a friendly, unconstrained hand to him as he stood looking out at his window. He had noted then the fire of her eyes, the colour of her skin, and the beautiful free movements of her body as the wind wrapped her garments close about her.

At last Giorgio rose to his feet, full of vigour, his mind made up. He crossed the room, slipped into his short, leather-lined jacket, put on his black felt hat, and taking his stick, the symbol of his importance, he blew out the light, locked the shack, and started along the beach.

He had not felt so light, physically and mentally, since the autumn. Out under the stars he pulled himself together, and when he reached the empty road he strode with an air of confidence. He thought of Rosie, and he paused, his stick held in mid-air, arrested in the arc of its swing. He chuckled to himself, softly, disdainfully, as at a mild joke; then he continued on his way. He'd show Rosie the kind of wife he wanted—he'd show them all! As he approached the Grania house, he paused

again for a moment. Then he went on to the door and knocked with his stick.

He could hear the voices within die out at his rapping. There was a sudden silence, broken by the scraping of a chair, and then the door was opened. Giorgio felt the lamplight in his eyes and the breath of warm air on his face; then Grania was saying, a trifle awkwardly, "What? Giorgio? Come in! Come in!"

When Mrs. Grania heard that rapping from the outside, her heart stood still. But at the sound of Vinti's voice it leaped into action again, racing madly in an ecstasy of gratification and joy. With a swift effort of will Mrs. Grania controlled her body—controlled the gleam in her eyes, her swift breathing, her nervous hands, her shaking voice. She rose from her chair and cried out, "Ah! Giorgio! What brings you? Are you sick, maybe?" She laughed as she spoke, and set a chair for the great man.

"No," he said emphatically. "I'm never sick."

He stood his stick in the corner, took off his coat and hat, and hung them on a hook behind the door—as if it had been his own customary hook—and sat down. Mrs. Grania went to fetch some wine, leaving her husband to entertain the guest.

No door hung between the kitchen and the hall that ran directly out of it to the front of the house. At the kitchen-end the hall was very narrow, but about twelve feet along there was an angle in the left-hand wall, two feet deep, and from that point on to the front of the house the hall was more amply dimensioned. In this angle of the hall Mr. Grania had built a high cupboard

full of shelves, and there Mrs. Grania kept her bottled wine.

The thin, nervous woman now went along the hall, without a light, and opened the door of this cupboard. There her strength left her—seemed to flow out of her body and leave her limp. She leaned against the cupboard and let her heart finish its racing. Her shallow bosom heaved; her body trembled. If she had relaxed the least bit further, she would have fallen to the floor in a faint. But she held herself from that with her hand pressed against her heart, and gradually her body subsided to normal. Giorgio's visit seemed to have waked every weakness in her.

When Mrs. Grania first heard the news of Vinti's search for a wife, she had shrugged her shoulders and said, "He'll want an orphan. Giorgio's too wise t' marry a mother-in-law." But as soon as the interest of her neighbours had been transferred to another speaker, she had cast a swift, appraising glance at Angela, and smiled quietly to herself.

The news had struck into her intelligence, waking ambitions there that she had never dreamed of before. She saw clearly that Angela was the most attractive creature on the Fist for the capturing of Vinti and all he stood for. During the following days, as the excitement of other mothers and other girls grew, she and Angela remained calm. A kind of vanity began to stir in Mrs. Grania—the vanity of a mother-in-law whose daughter has married well. She became aware of it and smothered it, knowing that one could not foretell what Giorgio might do, and determined to save herself from being ridiculous. She knew, too, that nothing she could

do would make Angela more eligible than she already was. So she did nothing, but watched the other women working, enjoyed their rivalries with equanimity, and waited.

To-night the rapping had come suddenly at the door. She knew immediately, intuitively, who it was and what he had come for. It was as if the heavy stick had pounded on her heart. The excitement that the other women had created for themselves day by day during the past week now descended upon Mrs. Grania like an avalanche out of the winter night, crushing her, smothering her, almost killing her.

She stood leaning against the cupboard, and as her quivering body grew calm her mind surveyed the future. She knew that Vinti was strong, knew that he could manage people's lives with his money. She had no intention of selling out to him, but she was ready to bargain for a great gain. If he wanted Angela, he must pay; if he wouldn't pay enough, he had better not have her, for that would mean that he did not want her enough for her happiness.

Mrs. Grania knew a great deal about the marriage relation. She knew what men in love were like, and she knew what they were like when love had faded as the principal motivation of their lives. She determined that there must be substance and permanence for Angela as a wife. If the girl could get love in the bargain too, she would be that much luckier; but Mrs. Grania did not see love as necessary—certainly other things were more important.

At last she stirred. She took two bottles of wine from the cupboard, closed it, went along the hall to the room

where Angela was sleeping and closed the door very quietly; then she returned to the kitchen with an amiable smile on her lips.

"Ah!" Giorgio exclaimed at sight of the dusty bottles.

Mrs. Grania placed one of the bottles at the back of the stove, that a slow warming might increase the smooth fluidity of its contents. Her husband rose and drew the cork from the other. Mrs. Grania poured the wine into clean tumblers and passed it around.

"Long life to all!" said Grania, raising his glass.

"An' success!" Giorgio added.

"An' happiness!" said Mrs. Grania.

They all drank and settled back comfortably in their chairs. For a time the talk was all of the quality of last year's grapes, who made the best wine at the Fist, the open winter, and the prospects of spring.

"How long you been at the Fist?" Giorgio asked at last.

"Mos' twenty years," Grania said.

"Time goes!" Giorgio remarked philosophically. "We get old an' children grow up."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Grania. "Not long ago I was young, like Angela. Now . . ." She shrugged.

Giorgio nodded. "Where's Angela?" he asked.

"In bed," said Mrs. Grania.

"She marry an' leave you pretty soon, eh?" he suggested.

Mrs. Grania threw out her chin with a toss of her head, suggesting that it was too remote for consideration. "She's young," she said. "Folks don't marry so young like they did."

Giorgio laughed out. "No," he said genially. "I'm jus' gettin' ready t' marry myself."

Mrs. Grania nodded. "I heard the talk. Is it true, then?"

"I do' know," Giorgio replied. "I'm afraid o' women."

The two men laughed at the jest, but Mrs. Grania maintained her reserve.

"You ain't found a wife yet?" Grania asked. "There's plenty o' women here at the Fist . . ."

Mrs. Grania shot a keen glance at her husband. "Pah!" she interrupted him. "There's no woman at the Fist for Giorgio!"

Vinti looked at her fixedly over his wine-glass.

"How old is Angela?" he asked quietly, still looking at the little woman.

"Angela? 'Most nineteen. She's a good girl."

Mrs. Grania made her statement quietly and looked at Giorgio without aggressiveness, calm and sure of herself. They understood each other. They had already entered into an intimacy that left Mr. Grania out—a sort of tentative mother- and son-in-law relation. They had come to the point of engaging for the mastery of the future.

"Yes," Giorgio said calmly, after a pause. "She's a good girl, an' she deserves a good husband."

Mrs. Grania shrugged. "A husband is a husband," she remarked, "but only girls like Angela are good."

Vinti smiled. "Even some husbands are better'n others," he said.

"Yes. Some are better because some are so bad."

Giorgio smiled again complacently. "Well, me, now! I'm thinkin' o' marryin'. What kind of a husband d'you think I'll make, Mrs. Grania?"

"You! Well, who knows? You can't tell about a husband till you see him married, like you can't tell about a farmer till you see him workin' his crops. It depen's on the woman too. Who you goin' t' marry?"

Giorgio laughed softly. "I do' know," he said, "but I don't want any ol' woman in my house."

"No. You ain't old enough t' want an ol' wife."

"I need life in my house, Mrs. Grania, an' I want a fam'ly by an' by."

"Sure. It is wise, Giorgio; an' I wish you luck."

"A girl like Angela, now; she wouldn't want t' marry an ol' fellah like me, eh?"

"Angela? Well! Why not?"

"Oh, she'll be thinkin' of a young husband."

"Angela's a good girl!" Mrs. Grania said with determination. "She don't think o' fellahs at all."

Giorgio shook his head. "I know," he remarked. "Sometimes I see her with a young fellah."

"Yes? Well, what would you have? A girl mus' play sometimes!"

"Sure," said Giorgio; "if it's on'y play."

"When the time comes," Mrs. Grania declared, "I can tell Angela all about men an' marryin', an' she'll listen t' me. I been a good mother t' Angela."

Giorgio nodded, and for a minute there was silence.

"Speak to her, then, Mrs. Grania," he said at last. "See what she thinks o' me for a husband."

"You want t' marry my Angela, Giorgio?" Mrs.

Grania looked steadily at him; Mr. Grania turned his head and looked at him too.

"Yes," Vinti said, looking from one to the other. "I need her in my house."

Mrs. Grania nodded, and again there was silence in the room. Mr. Grania, his legs stretched out before him, returned his gaze to his boots. Then Mrs. Grania spoke.

"I'll speak t' Angela, Giorgio; but if you need her in your house, you need a new house t' put her in, too."

"What for?" he asked.

"What for?" she repeated. "You got t' give a girl somethin' besides a ring."

"I'll give her a name," he said significantly.

"Any man she meets can give her a name, Giorgio." "But names don't all mean the same," he suggested.

"No. But look! Don't be afraid, Giorgio—I don't ever expect t' live anywheres but here in this house. A house means a lot to a woman. Yours ain't even as good as this one. Don't expect too much. Angela's young, an' she'll give you all she's got—an' that's what you want. You're rich. Well, then, spend some o' your money now."

"Yes," Giorgio said, "I got some money. When I marry, the woman comes to all I got. It's mine an' she gets what a woman needs. That's how."

"It's yours jus' the same if it's in a decent house an' she has it too. Angela can get a better house than this some day, Giorgio."

"That's so," he agreed. "For Angela it would be easy. Well, look then. I been thinkin' t' make a new start every way with this marriage business. If the girl wants

a new house she can have it. I ain't stingy. But a house takes time, an' I can't wait all year."

"I'll tell her about the new house, Giorgio. She could live in your house on the beach in the summer, if the new house is done in the fall."

"Well . . ." he considered. "Tell her if she wants a house we can start it as soon's the frost's out o' the ground."

"I'll talk t' her to-morrah," Mrs. Grania agreed.

They opened the second bottle of wine.

"Here's t' your success!" Giorgio said, looking at Mrs. Grania.

"An' t' your good luck!" she replied.

Angela's father drank in silence.

Giorgio swung into his jacket, pulled his felt hat tight on his head, took his stick from the corner, and bade the Granias good night.

When he had gone Angela's father and mother stood looking at each other in silence.

"Well—no?" Mrs. Grania said at last. Her husband said nothing, but nodded.

She washed the glasses wearily and in silence, and they went in to bed in the large room off the kitchen.

Out in the road Giorgio threw back his shoulders and chuckled to himself. The old woman had been shrewd. He felt confident that she would be able to handle Angela. So, it was well. But a new house! That was something! Yet he was pleased about the new house; he had not thought of it before, but now it appealed to him. He would make it a good house—the best at the Fist. It should be the crown of his pride. It would give

distinction to his marriage and to his wife. It would make the other women envious. He chuckled again.

He wanted to whistle, wanted to sing as he went along. The hovering darkness was not in keeping with his mood; he was in a spring mood. All the weeks of hesitation and thinking were over. Now he had only to handle the future, and he felt confident about the future.

He stood in front of his shack, looking out across the bay. At the foot of the beach the waves were lapping in lazily. Overhead the stars gleamed in mazes, infinitely splendid. He was alone in the night. It was good to be alone like this in the presence of a new future —strange and pleasant. . . .

X

After breakfast the next morning Mrs. Grania said to Angela, "Hurry, now, an' clear up there. I want t' do some cookin'."

Angela cleared the table and began to wash the dishes at the sink. All her motions were graceful and lovely. As she worked, her strong young body seemed light, and her eyes were clear with looking out to far horizons.

"Did we wake you up las' night with our talk?" Mrs. Grania asked at last.

"No. I didn't hear anything."

"Giorgio Vinti was here."

"Giorgio? What did he want?"

"Oh, he wanted t' brag about gettin' married."

Angela laughed. "Giorgio's the limit!" she said.

"He'll make a good husban' for someone," Mrs. Grania remarked casually.

The girl made a grimace, and went on with her work.

"Why don't you marry Giorgio yourself?" Mrs. Grania suggested after a while.

"Marry Vinti! I guess not!"

"No?" Mrs. Grania asked evenly. "Why not?" She was carefully calculating her way.

"Why, he's an old man, mother. I don't want t' marry an old man."

"Psha!" said Mrs. Grania. "He's on'y old enough t' have sense."

"Well, if he's got sense he won't expect t' marry me."

"Huh! Every woman in the place is crazy t' get him."

"They can have him," Angela retorted. "I'm willin'."

"Willin'!" her mother cried with warmth. "Willin' t' let some other woman get the best man you'll ever have a chance t' marry?"

"Sure. I don't want him. An' he ain't the best man I'll ever have a chance t' marry. He's bad."

"Bad! What d'you mean?"

"He's bad. You know as well as I do. He's lived with a dozen women an' never married one of 'em. Let him keep on with them—there's lots more women like that. But I ain't that kind, an' I don't want that kind of a husband."

"So! And what kind do you want, then? D'you expect t' marry a saint?"

"No, I don't expect t' marry a saint. But I want a man—better'n Vinti."

"Better!" cried Mrs. Grania. "Let me tell you, men are all alike. P'raps you think that fellah of Santos' is better."

Angela flushed. "Yes, he is," she declared.

"Pah! He's no better'n Giorgio, I tell you."

"He is better. You don't know him at all."

"Don't I, then! You think you're the on'y girl he ever looked at, maybe. Ask him, then—ask him how many women he's known; an' then you'll know him for what he is, or I'll know him for a liar besides."

"O' course I won't ask him!" Angela said indignantly.

"You don't dare!" her mother shrieked. "I can see what he is in his face an' in his eyes. Bah! He wants

you an' Giorgio wants you, an' there ain't any difference between 'em."

"If that was true," Angela said, "I wouldn't marry either of 'em."

"Don't be a fool!" said Mrs. Grania. "You weren't born t' be an ol' maid."

Angela made no reply. She had finished the dishes. She went over and hung the towels behind the stove, and started to leave the room. Her mother's floury hand caught her by the wrist, and the old woman pushed her into a chair.

"Listen t' me," she said fiercely. "'Giorgio Vinti has come an' offered t' make you his wife. Use your head an' don't be a fool. Think what it means. He's rich!"

"I don't care! He's rotten! An' he's old!"

"He's the on'y man o' substance in the place. He'll make you proud. Don't be a fool!"

Angela was crying now. "I wouldn't marry him for all the money there is! You're tryin' t' sell me! You know what Vinti is! Everyone knows what he is! Marry him yourself!"

She began to shout, grown suddenly hysterical. "They'd talk about me the way they talk about the other women he's had in his shack. I won't marry him! I'll tell Father Pasquale what you're doin' t' me. You're jus' as bad as Vinti! I'll pray to the Virgin Mary t' curse you, if you make me do this . . ."

Her voice trailed off into incoherence. She sat rigid in her chair, weeping, babbling unintelligible phrases. Mrs. Grania let her spend herself for a minute or two. Then she went over to the pail on the sink-board and brought the girl a cup of water.

"Here!" she said. "Drink, an' stop your foolishness."

Angela took the cup and put it to her lips. Her teeth chattered against the rim as she drank. Then she handed the cup back to her mother. She dried her swollen face with her apron and pushed the hair back from her damp forehead. Her loveliness had disappeared, drowned in the flood of her tears. Her face was blotched and swollen, her body had lost its buoyancy. She had wasted her spirit and her stamina in a futile protest.

It was for this moment that Mrs. Grania had waited and manœuvered. She was a wise woman—a woman of experience. She had observed the victors and the defeated in many an encounter. She allowed Angela to sob for a few minutes, and then she talked.

"Listen, Angy. I'm your mother. D'you think I'd sell you? An' what for? You're all I got in the world. I want you t' marry Giorgio Vinti, but I ain't gettin' anything out of it. It's for your good I want it—not mine, an' not his. Any husban' you get'll be like Vinti, child. Some ain't so bad, an' some ain't so good; but you won't know till you're married what kind of a man you've got. But I know Giorgio. He's sowed his wild oats. He can forget other women now an' cling t' you. He's rich. He can give you things t' make you happy. He's promised t' build a new house for you, an' he'll do more."

"I don't love him," Angela protested.

"No. But he loves you, an' that's more important. Women don't need t' be loved t' be happy. If they get love, they're lucky. What they need is somethin' t' love, an' God sends 'em children for that. You think you love that Joe over to Santos'. Well, p'raps you do. An' p'raps he loves you. But how long? Love don't run

this world, Angy. If it did, money wouldn't mean so much. But it don't, anyway, an' poor people 're fools t' think they can afford it. You been friendly with Giorgio all your life. You can go on bein' friendly with him —that's all there is to it!"

"Oh, mother! It's not all!"

"I say it *is* all. You think there's somethin' holy about bein' married? There ain't—on'y as a woman an' her husban' make it holy. You always been clean an' pure as a girl, ain't you, Angy?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'll be clean an' pure as a wife, doin' the work God made you for, whatever man you marry. You got t' use your brains, girl. Life's made o' work an' hard sense—not o' feelin's. You were all right before you met this Joe, an' you'll be all right again after you forget him."

Mrs. Grania paused, but Angela said nothing.

"You're young, Angy. You don't understand these things. I'm old an' I know all the sorrow o' makin' mistakes. Look at me now, an' some day you'll thank God you're not like I am. Take Giorgio, in God's name, for better or worse, an' don't be a fool. He's the on'y man o' money you'll ever meet on the Fist. Don't be a brainless thing, but take your good fortune while you've got the chance. Yes, good fortune! For who are you? I'm your mother, an' I say it. Who are you? When you've got Vinti's money by you you'll find life's different from all you've ever known. Bein' in his house, with his children round you, you'll amount t' somethin'; you'll be somebody."

Angela still wiped her eyes from time to time, but un-

der the flow of her mother's talk she had grown calm. She was tired out.

"Here!" said Mrs. Grania, as she handed the girl a glass of wine. "Drink this, an' go in an' lay down. Be sensible, Angy, an' begin t' make up your mind. Remember what I've told you, an' don't shame your mother."

As Angela lay on her dingy unmade bed, her thoughts became clearer, sharper, nervous—jumping from phase to phase of her problem. She thought of Vinti and she was stirred by a swift revulsion. She thought of Joe, and a gentle passionate desire moved in her breast. There was something about Joe that she didn't understand, and all her senses were eager to probe the mystery. She loved to see him, loved to hear him talk and sing and whistle and laugh; she longed to touch him—to trace the outline of his ear with her finger-tips, to disarrange the heaviness of his black hair. Every fact of his personality cast back into Angela's being the reflected brightness of her own idealized desires. Beside the flashing beauty of Joe's attractiveness Vinti was like an unimportant pale shadow. Now the older man had taken on an aspect of terror.

But in spite of all that, the picture of a future with Vinti stole quietly into Angela's thoughts—the great new house, herself as the mother of his children. Repeatedly she turned it out and dragged her mind away to contemplate the splendid image of Joe; but it returned each time—that vision of the future that her mother had planted in her consciousness—and at last it found a champion in the girl's own breast—a champion ready to present, to

argue, to urge Vinti's cause. This new voice repeated interminably Mrs. Grania's arguments.

"He's rich, and he loves you," it said.

"I hate him! He's bad!" Angela retorted.

"He's not so bad, as men go, an' Joe's not so good."

"I love him—Joe."

"Yes, but you'd be a fool t' marry him an' slave all your life. Vinti's rich, remember. You won't have t' work in the fields if you marry Vinti."

"I don't care. I hate him."

"Wouldn't you like a fine new house?"

"I'd rather live in a shed with Joe!" Angela cried.

"In a shed!" the voice considered. "In a shed! Well, it might come t' that with Joe. Think o' your children livin' in a shed!"

"I love Joe!" she exclaimed desperately.

"Yes, an' Joe loves you. But he's loved other girls."

"So has Vinti. Joe couldn't be as bad as him."

"P'raps," the voice conceded. "Who knows? Anyway, Vinti's done with women, but Joe's young yet. He may see others that he'll like."

"He won't. He's honest. He told me."

"Yes? Well . . . But suppose your husband died? As Mrs. Vinti you'd be safe. You'd have a fine house an' some money, an' Joe would still be somewhere. But as Joe's widow you'd be out in the road. You'd have t' come home t' this house. You'd have t' work to feed the baby you might have. An' Giorgio wouldn't want you then."

"I'd work for Joe's baby, but I'd hate Vinti's."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," the voice mocked. "Women don't hate their children."

"I would hate it!" Angela whispered wildly.

The only answer was mild laughter. Then the voice began again.

"It's a fine house Giorgio's goin' t' build."

"I wouldn't live in it! I hate him!"

"He's generous. Remember the little cakes he used t' give you riding home from school? An' the Chinese nuts? He's jolly, too. He always liked you. You think he's bad 'cause you know all about him, but you don't know all about Joe, so you think he's good." The voice laughed again. "There's more'n one way o' judgin' a man.

"You're a sensible girl," the voice went on, after a pause. "Love ain't everythin', remember; an' when it's gone it's a good thing t' have a house an' some money, just like your mother says. An ol' husband can be managed, too; but young fellahs are funny. They often change their minds."

"Joe's mine!" Angela cried.

"Well, all right. You'll have t' take the consequences, o' course. Your mother's told you all about it, an' she knows. She ain't had any too good a time in life. I guess she'd like t' see you better fixed. Why don't you take her advice? Ask Father Pasquale, if you want to. He's a good man. But don't forget the grand new house."

Thus doubts took possession of Angela's soul. The sharp certainty of her first reaction was gone; she had begun to wonder what she ought to do. At last she went to sleep from sheer weariness; and later, when her mother found her so, she closed the door of the room and went quietly about her tasks.

XI

Mrs. Grania had determined that she would become the mother-in-law of Giorgio Vinti. She felt equal to managing her daughter to this end, if she could have a free hand to do so; but the free hand she so much needed to bring Angela to the point of acquiescence was endangered by the presence of Joe. Mrs. Grania saw that he might at any moment step into the leading rôle in the action—might carry the heroine off at will and become the hero-bridegroom in a comedy for the delight of all the Fist; or he might give the whole piece a tragic cast by untoward intervention of another sort. As she thought of him and these possibilities, the little woman came to hate him with an intense and personal hatred that was half fear. Joe's youth was against her; if she could, she would have turned him into a state of doddering decrepitude. His good looks were against her; if she could, she would have made him hideous, loathsome, monstrous.

It occurred to her to challenge him openly with his past and drag the truth out of him, whatever it might be, in Angela's presence; but she knew that if she made the attempt he would surely lie to save himself, knew that Angela would believe the baldest lie he could tell.

She might have left it to Vinti to settle with him, but her pride was alert against such a compromise. Vinti should never be able to say that he had saved the girl

from someone else. No, Mrs. Grania would herself remove all impediments to the marriage. The girl should go to Giorgio when the time came, free, unhampered and uncompromised; poor, but complete in pride and reputation.

Mrs. Grania must accomplish her purpose alone. Her husband was of no assistance to her—she dominated him. Her daughter must be coerced. Joe was likely to become aggressive at any minute. The other men and women of the Fist must be kept in ignorance, or they would form an alliance of jealousy against her. Father Pasquale was an unknown quantity. Mrs. Grania was mildly afraid of him, but she felt that if the others could be managed, he could.

She was all alone, and she could not hurry things. For a woman of her temperament it was the most trying of situations—waiting, waiting, filled with fears, imagining a thousand possibilities of disaster that would never occur; helpless, hoping, eager, but retarded on every hand. And there in the background stood Vinti himself, cynical, smiling, watching her. Her temper reared at the thought of his coolness, and her determination hardened.

Yet she was cheered, in spite of all menacing circumstances, by that vision of Vinti there at her back, for she hoped that she might profit from the association through the mere automatic operation of his good luck.

Giorgio's good luck was notorious; it stood by him in important undertakings and in the details of small affairs. On this Monday it operated as usual, and Mrs. Grania profited, as she had hoped.

Giorgio had left the Fist early in the morning and

had gone to Providence, intending to talk business with two or three of his old friends, wholesale dealers in fish, preparatory to making his plans for the summer's work.

He called first on his friend Mr. Romas, a thin, swart old man, Portuguese like Giorgio, who had a warehouse down on one of the mouldy wharves of the city. The building was very dark and old; the thick odour of brine hung heavy in the air. Narrow stairs went steeply up to a small office on the second floor, and here, in the dingy, low-ceiled room, Giorgio found his friend looking through an ancient ledger for lack of something better to do. When Giorgio entered, the old man paid no heed. Vinti pounded with his stick and cried out, "Hi there! Romas!" Then the man at the desk shut the ledger with a bang, leaped to his feet, and held out his hands.

"Giorgio!" he cried. "Come in, you old bear! Come in an' wake me up! You bring the smell of the sea into this old tomb!"

"Ah, you're on'y sleepin' here, then!" Giorgio laughed and shook hands. "I thought you was dead, sure!"

"Dead!" the other exclaimed with a gesture. "Yes! Everything is dead!"

Giorgio nodded. "Everything!" he agreed. "I left the sea dead this mornin'!" He handed Mr. Romas a cigar, and sat down with his stick between his knees.

"The sea?" Romas repeated. "No, not the sea. You'll find it lively enough down there this summer."

Giorgio laughed evenly. "I hope so," he said, "but I left it dead this mornin'."

"You'll find it lively enough, I tell you! The Trust's

goin' down into your waters this summer an' clean you out."

"Yes?" said Giorgio, with a squinting smile. "The Trust?" The smile faded slowly from his face. Hard lines settled about his mouth and a hard light gleamed in his eyes. "You mean it?" he asked at last.

"I hear so."

"It means a fight, eh?" Giorgio gripped his stick and leaned forward. "Listen. Last year I had four traps on the shores o' the Fist. This year I'll have eight—ten. I'll sow those waters so full o' nets they won't be able t' navigate their boats."

"That'll be a good excuse for 'em t' rip your nets to pieces," the other warned.

"Bah! They can't rip 'em all. An' their nets is just as easy ripped as mine, eh?"

"Look out, Giorgio! They ain't afraid, an' they got a lot o' money."

"We'll help 'em spend some of it, then!"

"They'll beat you in the end."

"Well, they'll have t' fight me first. Look, Romas, I'm goin' t' fish this summer. You better plan t' sell some fish."

Romas shrugged. "You never swamped us yet," he smiled. "My warehouse is empty now."

"I'll send you fish before the first of April. Get ready! I'm goin' t' fish this summer, I tell you."

"Good! I'm waitin' for you."

They talked business for ten minutes more, and then Giorgio left Romas to his dreamy perusal of old ledgers.

Vinti visited two of his other business friends that

day—Yankees who had no warehouses but carried on their activities, in clean linen and creased trousers, at offices in prominent office buildings. They were suave, middle-aged men, alert, intelligent, familiar with the market, and they represented, respectively, New York and Boston dealers of importance and long standing. They greeted Giorgio casually, and though they had little to say, that little was reassuring.

His luck that day lay in knowing, so early in the season, of the Trust's intended invasion. He laughed quietly as he thought of the coming contest. Let them come! They'd find him and his men on duty, and whatever fish there might be in the waters running into his traps.

As he walked along, filled with these thoughts, he was jerked out of his optimistic contemplation by a prod from his subconsciousness He was passing a Chinese shop, and there, in the very middle of the window, stood a great bowl, elaborately covered with a design in gilt and red and yellow and green, and it was full of Chinese nuts piled up like the cone of a mountain.

Giorgio laughed to himself as his thoughts turned to Angela. He went in and bought a quantity of the nuts. But as he resumed his walk to the train, the package of nuts seemed a cheap present for a man of his standing to take to his sweetheart, and he turned back to the centre of the city, determined to purchase a gift more suitable.

On this expedition Giorgio's emotions were inactive. The transaction was a matter of his mind alone, and his mind was very much concerned with his pride. He went into a prominent jeweller's shop and began to examine the

trays of lockets that were presented for his inspection. He had decided to purchase a locket rather than a ring, because he was reserving the ring to be the symbol of his triumphant betrothal. The present gift was to be splendid, but it was a tentative gesture only, an earnest of what was to follow for his bride, a suggestion of the splendour his wife might expect to count upon.

As he examined the lockets, he tried to visualize the appearance of each one against the clear skin of Angela's throat, and as he brought the picture of her again and again before his mind he became conscious of her absolute worthiness of the best he could bring himself to purchase. None of them seemed sufficiently good; Giorgio wanted something that would flash and sparkle—something that would dazzle the eyes of the beholders. But the salesman quoted a list of prices that left in Giorgio's mind no doubt of the excellence of the goods before him, and at last, with the astute salesman's assistance, he purchased a particular locket and a chain. They were placed in a small velvet-covered case with the firm's great name printed in gold within, and Giorgio departed.

He reached the Fist late in the afternoon. It was growing dark. He smiled as he went along. He would, he thought, go at once and see what progress his prospective mother-in-law had made in his suit. Incidentally, she might invite him to have supper. He strode on to the door of the Grania house and rapped; again his luck was with him—the family was just sitting down to the meal.

At his entrance there was a silent turmoil of emotion in the room. Angela looked at him with wild fear in her

eyes; Mrs. Grania's eyes went back and forth from his face to her daughter's, while a smile, frozen on her lips, made her own face hideous. This was not the time for Vinti's interference, she thought, and she did not know how to meet the awkward situation his coming had created. Mr. Grania, giving no sign of his feelings, held out his hand for the great man's hat. But Giorgio, perceiving how things were, protested that he had not come to stay. Thereupon Mrs. Grania seemed to waken from a trance and became voluble in her insistence that he sit down.

Vinti was ready to take a hand in the situation—he had his cards in his pocket—and at last he allowed himself to be persuaded. Another chair was placed at the table, he gave his hat and stick to Mr. Grania, and hung his coat behind the door; he took a package from its pocket and laid it, with a larger package that he carried, beside the plate that had been placed for him. Mrs. Grania filled his tumbler with wine; then they all sat down.

"Before we eat an' drink," Giorgio began, "I want t' say I come t' see Angela. I been t' town to-day an' saw somethin' she used t' like when she went t' school, an' I brought her some."

He smiled kindly at the girl as he spoke, and passed the package of Chinese nuts across the table to her. Angela took it listlessly. She opened the papers and smiled sadly at sight of the contents; then she bit her lip to keep back the tears, for she was suddenly swept by a recollection of happy times that now seemed dead for ever.

"Thanks," she murmured. "I used t' like Chinese

nuts." She bit her lip again and held her breath, for still the tears continued to rise.

"Ah!" Giorgio cried, looking about him trumphantly. "I knew I was right! Let us drink, now, to Angela's happiness for ever!"

They raised their glasses, but Angela was still fumbling with the package of nuts. The others sat with the glasses in their hands, looking at her, waiting for her. She felt those eyes upon her, and at last she took up her glass and sipped the wine. But she did not look up; she did not dare; and as she put her glass back upon the table, two great tears escaped from her lowered lashes, ran down her cheeks, and fell upon her breast.

The others, seeing those tears, sat in embarrassed silence. Giorgio was moved to a kind of pity for the girl. Mrs. Grania had a terrible premonition of failure; she was angry with Giorgio for this interference.

The old woman kept a grip on her faculties, but she was already wearying of the fight. Because of her tremendous ambition, the possibility of a splendid victory, she was not appalled; she was, nevertheless, being swiftly worn down to that condition in which, in desperation, she would either achieve a brilliant success or accept annihilation with valour. It angered her now that Giorgio, who should be her dependable ally, was creating difficulties for her. She didn't know how to act; but she turned to her daughter.

"What ails you, Angy?" she asked quietly, leaning toward the girl, but Angela, making no answer, buried her face in her arms on the table and began to cry.

"Let her alone," Giorgio commanded. "She'll be better soon. Let's eat."

Mrs. Grania served the meat-pie that was the main dish of the meal, and for a time they all ate without speaking. Mrs. Grania was at last able to induce Angela to take some food and to drink her wine. By the time they had finished, the girl was calm and sadly quiet.

Then Giorgio pushed back his chair.

"Are you goin' t' marry me, Angela?" he asked.

He was abrupt. The girl stiffened, threw at him a look of mingled weariness and fear, and dropped her eyes again.

"I don't know," she said listlessly.

Giorgio looked at Mrs. Grania with raised eyebrows. She gave him a steady look in return.

"Well, don't hurry about it," he said to Angela. "I know how you feel. You're young. But you got t' get married some day, an' I'll be kinder to you'n any other man on earth'll be. I want you more'n anyone else can want you."

Angela raised her eyes and looked into his.

"You don't love me right," she blurted out.

"Eh!" he cried. "I do, child! O' course I do!"

"You're a bad man," she murmured. "Mrs. Lemos says it's a sin for you t' marry any woman."

"Mrs. Lemos?" Giorgio repeated quietly. "What does Mrs. Lemos know? I am bad; but Mrs. Lemos ain't my judge. I want t' be better, an' I will be if you'll come an' help me. I need you."

There was silence. Nobody spoke. They all expected Angela to say something further, but she gave no sign.

"Look," Giorgio said at last. "Don't think I don't love you, girl. I'm here t' say I do before your people. An' why else would I want t' marry you? I been thinkin' o'

you for years, watchin' you grow up from a little thing, waitin' for you. I've thought about you too long t' have you go back on me now. I was thinkin' about you all day in town, too, an' I brought you a present you'll like more'n Chinese nuts."

Giorgio opened the velvet case and placed it on the table where all might see the bright beauty of its contents. Mrs. Grania and her husband leaned forward to look; then they gazed at Giorgio in amazement—only love could make a man so generous. Mrs. Grania felt a renewed justification in her cause; her husband put away his last doubts of Giorgio's genuineness. But Angela, after one swift glance at the jewel, turned her face away.

"What's the matter? Don't you like it?" Giorgio asked.

"I can't take it," she said.

"Why not? It's for you—it's yours!" he exclaimed.

He reached forward and lifted the chain with its pendent locket from the case; then he rose, went around the table, and fastened it clumsily on Angela's neck, as if to make her understand that he meant what he said.

At sight of the chain and locket sparkling at her daughter's throat, Mrs. Grania's wearying forces rallied round a white plume of inspiration. She saw the trinket as a strong weapon that Vinti had put into her hand, and she grasped it with a metaphorical firmness, pledging her utmost fidelity to maintain it inviolate, secure. Here, she felt, she was moving in the path of Giorgio's notorious good luck. As long as she could hold this weapon—as long as she could keep the chain and locket gleaming there at her daughter's throat—Joe, her strongest, her most daring enemy, would be powerless to rout her. It

was like a charm against which he would be impotent. It marked Angela as the property of the man who had placed it there. Mrs. Grania massed her forces anew and concentrated them to hold that shining ornament secure where Giorgio's clumsy fingers had fastened it.

"There!" Vinti said, stepping away and looking at the girl. "Now it's yours! You ought t' have pretty things. I hope it makes you happy. You ought t' be happy. Don't let 'em worry you about anythin'. If they worry you, you come an' tell me."

He turned as he finished speaking and took his coat from the nail and swung into it He got his stick from the corner and found his hat; then, with a curt, offhand "Good night," he went out and closed the door.

XII

As the door closed behind Giorgio, Angela's hands, tremulous, shaking, were raised to fumble with the clasp of the chain which he had fastened on her neck. The gentle weight of it, stirring quietly as she breathed, was like the touch of an encircling snake upon her skin. Her body trembled under the contact; her face was set, her eyes staring.

It was an intricate, competent little clasp, intelligently designed to remain safely locked except at the suggestion of a precise, gentle pressure at a particular point of its surface. Before Angela had found this secret of release her mother stepped to her side and grasped her wrist.

"Stop!" she cried. Her voice was husky with the intensity of her determination.

Angela tried to free herself from her mother's grasp, but the hand that held her was like a rope—strong, hard, flexible, and it held her fast.

"Have I got t' beat sense into you?" the woman asked.

"Let me be!" Angela cried, paying no heed to her question.

"Hey! Listen!" Mr. Grania interposed.

Mrs. Grania turned at the unexpected sound of his voice, and Angela's left hand went to her neck to tear the chain away.

At that moment the door opened—a crack a foot wide

—so that they could all see the blackness of the night outside, and Vinti's voice, out of the darkness, said, "It's beginnin' t' rain!" Then the door was closed again with a slight slam.

The three people in the room stood as if awe-struck, and listened to the sound of dying footsteps on the frozen ground. So sudden was the interruption of the intense little drama upon which all their faculties had been centred, the web of their concentration had been shattered, their respective determinations broken, their respective purposes delayed. Angela's raised arm fluttered down from her throat; Mrs. Grania's grasp on her daughter's arm relaxed. They stood and looked at each other in silence a moment, their thoughts upon the man withdrawing in the dark; and as they stood, like an echo of his personality, the sound of the rain came rapping in sharp *staccato* points upon the window and the roof.

Mr. Grania was the first to recover the broken thread of his previous thought. "Well!" he exclaimed at last, as if dismissing the interruption; then, resuming his former rôle of pacifist, he said, "What ails you women?"

Mrs. Grania's grasp tightened on Angela's wrist.

"Bah!" she said to her husband. "Is she goin' t' marry him or not?"

"No!" Angela cried out. "I won't! Look!" she said, turning to her father. "What makes you let them do this to me?"

"Hush!" he cautioned her. "Listen. If it wasn't for your good d'you suppose I'd let 'em do it?" Then to his wife he said, " 'Twon't do no good t' kill her!"

"Kill her! Kill her!" Mrs. Grania cried. "The fool! Is she goin' t' let him go, then?"

"Listen, Angy," Grania said. "Why don't you marry Giorgio? It's for your good. He's honest about it. You won't find a better man for a husban'."

"Are you as bad as him?" Angela cried.

"That don't matter," he said. "Maybe I am, maybe not. But you can't marry me. You don't know anythin' about men. Take my advice: do as your mother tells you."

"I won't!" the girl cried. "I hate him!"

In a sudden access of anger, fear and desperation she pulled away from her mother's grasp and turned swiftly toward the narrow hall, her hands raised to release the clasp of the chain on her neck.

In an instant the old woman was after her like a tigress. Her eyes were wild, her lips were drawn tight across her yellow teeth, her breath whistled in her throat. As she leaped from her place her hand went reaching like a claw. She faced defeat—defeat and shame. Every faculty was strained to save her from that disaster. She must, at all costs, keep that locket shining at her daughter's throat.

She moved swiftly around the table in pursuit of the girl, crying madly, "Come back! Come back here, you! Come back, d'you hear me!" But Mr. Grania, seeing her wildness, put out his hand and arrested her progress.

"Let go!" she screamed at him. "Let me go! I'll teach her! I'll kill her or I'll make her do what I say!"

"Shut up!" Grania commanded. "Keep quiet!"

But the woman's rage increased. Her eyes protruded with madness, sweat stood in an unhealthy mist upon her forehead, her lips were flecked with foam.

They could hear Angela slam and lock her door.

"Let me go!" Mrs. Grania shrieked, and she bit at her husband's strong restraining arm.

But her teeth had barely fastened upon the tensed muscles when her grip relaxed, her hand went to her bosom, and with a groan she sank slowly down at his feet.

Suddenly the house seemed filled with an intense silence.

"God!' Grania exclaimed under his breath.

He stooped to lift his wife, and as he leaned over her, there stabbed through his anxiety a kind of sympathy—a kind of pity. She lay in a heap, small, huddled, very still. The lines of her body showed through the disordered mass of her garments, and he was struck with her worn frailness.

"Angy!" he called. "Come here, quick! Your mother's fainted!"

Angela made no response

"Angela!" he called again, raising his voice.

But still the girl paid no heed.

Grania was desperate with anxiety and terror. His wife lay too still—she didn't seem even to breathe. He didn't know what to do. "Angela!" he cried, again and again. "Angela! Angela! Angela!" He was calling to his wife as much as to his daughter, hoping childishly that she might make some response to his noise.

"Angy! Your mother's dead! Come here! Angela!" He was shrieking at last, hideously, like a beast. And at last Angela, appalled at the wildness of his voice, opened her door and came cautiously down the hall.

When Grania heard his daughter coming, his cries

ceased suddenly and he gazed intently into the still, white face of his wife. Angela was terrified at the sight of her parents there together. Her father knelt with one knee on the floor; against the other he had raised his wife's limp body. He had opened her dress at the throat, and he was pushing the hair back from her forehead with methodical, senseless strokes of his hand. The little woman in his grasp looked like a broken thing. One foot was doubled under her somewhere incredibly. The other was extended at a crazy angle, seeming somehow dissociated from her body. The skinny contour of her ankle and foreleg, in an old shoe and a ragged cotton stocking, were revealed in a manner that seemed pathetically shameful.

As Angela grasped this picture in an instant, her father raised his face to her and said, in a strange, accusing voice, "See what you've done! See what you've done t' your mother!"

The girl stood looking down at the figure of her mother; then she began to whimper. She fell on her knees beside the unconscious figure and gazed into the quiet face. She took the listless hand and felt for the pulse, whimpering meanwhile. A fear that she had never before known held her in its clutch. She was too terrified to speak or to cry. Suddenly she rose and opened the door to the bedroom off the kitchen.

"Lift her on to the bed," she said.

Grania looked at the girl stupidly for a minute, then he dully obeyed.

"Get some brandy," Angela commanded, and her father turned toward the hall. The girl pulled off her mother's shabby slippers and began to undo her clothes. She

pushed a pillow under the frowzy grey head. Then she stood looking into the unresponsive face that had so recently been filled with passion. She knew that her mother was dead, but she could not admit it to herself, for a tide of fear was rising in her, and only her refusal to admit the fact saved her from being overwhelmed. When her father brought the brandy, she spread it on her mother's lips and nostrils, and forced a few drops into the silent mouth.

"I'll go an' get Mrs. Silvia," he proposed.

"No," she said.

"No?"

"No."

She pulled a covering over her mother's body and listened again for the beat of the passionate heart; but there was no response to her seeking, and the tide of fear rose in her. There was something terrifying and awful about the dead woman's plunge into eternity. It was as if she had deliberately gone away—as if things had become unbearable for her—as if she had been driven out—driven out of the world.

Yes, she had been driven out—by Angela. The girl's father had accused her: "See what you've done t' your mother!" She stood looking into the woman's still face, and slow tears began to run down her cheeks. A great pain rose in her, contracting her throat. She would never again hear that crying, querulous voice. She sank on her knees beside the bed, and the tides of fear overwhelmed her. She was terrified at herself—she had killed her mother.

She whispered into the thin deaf ear. "Mother! Come back t' me! I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Come back. I'll do

whatever you want. I'll marry him, mother. Speak t' me! Say you're glad. I'm doin' it for you. Listen! I'll marry Giorgio, so help me God! I'll mind you, mother—I'll mind you, mother—I'll do anything! But don't leave me like this. Speak t' me—oh, speak t' me!"

The thin lips made no response, the closed eyes gave no sign. The rain pounded on the roof.

"Don't you hear me?" Angela cried. She placed her head beside her mother's head on the pillow and wept. A strange, quiet love, of which she had never before been conscious, flowed out of her like an essence and bathed her mother's body. Nothing in the world was so dear, so precious as that thin frame beneath the bed-clothes. She kissed the wrinkled cheek beside her, and wet the face with her tears. She was responsible for this—her own great loss. Above everything else in life now, she wanted to atone; she longed to sacrifice herself to prove the beauty of her love, the depth of her contrition and her sorrow.

"I'll marry Giorgio," she said again to the senseless figure on the bed. "I promise t' do as you want, if you'll only forgive me. I'll go an' tell him I'm ready. I been bad t' you, but I'll do what you want."

She clasped one thin hand in hers and pressed it to her lips, and kneeling there beside the bed, she wept in agony for all her mother's pain.

After a while her father came in from the kitchen and stood restlessly watching her. He couldn't weep himself, although the world seemed strange and empty. Without his wife, life was too terrible for tears.

"It's no use, I guess—is it?" he said at last. "I better go an' get Mrs. Silvia?"

Angela raised her face, wet with tears.

"Yes," she said, "you better go. Tell her t' come right over—mother's dead. An' tell Giorgio Vinti I want t' see him."

The man went out.

Angela rose from her knees and went to her own room. There, without looking at herself in the stained mirror, she took from the pincushion where she had thrown them, the chain and locket that Vinti had brought her from town that day. She held the chain about her neck and fastened the clasp. Then she returned to her mother's room and fell on her knees beside the bed.

Thus, simply, Mrs. Grania won her great victory and paid the ultimate price—annihilation. Annihilation, if she had thought of it, would have seemed to her a fair price to pay. All the futile desires that she had planted—buried—through the uneventful years of her life had at last burst into the bloom of a fanatical idea in one gorgeous plot in her soul. To retain that splendour of bloom unfaded, to see it develop into actuality, made permanent, and standing, at last, as a monumental achievement justifying her whole drab existence, would have seemed to her, if she had thought of it, a consummation so greatly to be desired that she would readily have agreed to the terms and clutched her bargain to her heart. Only—she would have liked to see the lovely consummation with her mortal eyes—would at least have liked to know that in paying the price she had worsted Fate at bargaining.

But not all the spoils are ever captured by the victor, and if, in this case, these precious incidental conditions

were denied Mrs. Grania, her victory was otherwise all that she could have asked for. The locket hung and would continue to hang, shining and beautiful, at her daughter's throat. Angela's surrender—the key to the entire campaign—was complete and unconditional. Joe's strength became isolated and inoperative.

Later, when the old woman lay in her coffin, victorious, calm, and justified, all the inhabitants of the Fist came and paid her homage. They marvelled at her prowess; they recited to each other the episodes of her uneventful life; they recalled her qualities of courage and endurance.

Angela picked up the fruits of her mother's victory—bitter fruits for the girl—grieving that she should have died for such a false cause, in such a mistaken adventure.

Mr. Grania was bewildered. All his life he had dimly hoped to be present at the enactment of some great event; but when his wife went down victorious, he was unaware of the splendours clashing about him. Now he could think of nothing but her absence and his own loneliness. He could neither perceive nor value the gorgeous blooming that her life had gone to pay for. He saw, with the eyes of a man, not any gain, but only an irretrievable loss.

XIII

Angela had led the way down the hall and into the front room, sustained by a tragic sense of atoning for the crime of her mother's death, and Giorgio had followed her, sensing what she was going to do, uncomfortably aware that he was about to profit through the misfortune of the Granias. It was not the way of his nature to take advantage of the unfortunate, and as he turned to close the door behind him he was suffused by a mood of bluff magnanimity.

He struck a match and lighted the lamp, and as the light spread through the room he and Angela stood opposite each other—two souls alone in a bright silence. About them moved, invisible but felt, a thousand embryonic possibilities of life. In a vague region they were to attempt to find happiness—were to pick out of the dim chaos of passing time an amœba, a pupa of progressive existence which, on developing, should prove to be happiness. It was a hazardous undertaking. Even to people ready to resist and yield to each other sympathetically, ready to work together with the best understanding and the best will in the world, the choices are without number. Lovers fail to make a right selection as often as those who are not in love. It is the game of life; to sit in at the play is to take incredible risks.

In spite of all discrepancies and all the peculiar con-

ditions of their case, it would be impossible to say (especially in view of Giorgio's habitual good luck) that their chance to make a fortunate selection was not as good a chance as any two people could have. Mrs. Grania had not been entirely wrong—happiness does not permanently depend on love, or on the matching of ages or bank accounts, or on anything that can be named. It is simply because it depends on innumerable unconsidered phrases, gestures, appearances, desires, demands, on concessions, pains, triumphs, on temperament, on character—because it depends on everthing, in short, that it has never been formularized and remains a mystery. Only those can have happiness who prize it above all other items in life, and by them it will be found in unexpected places. Only those can have the illusion of it who are willing to go blind.

"Sit down," Giorgio suggested. "You look tired."

Angela made a gesture, but did not move from where she stood.

"D'you honestly want me t' marry you, Giorgio?" she asked.

"Why, yes, o' course, Angela."

"Well . . ." she began. She paused for a moment, but almost immediately she went on. "Well, I'm ready."

He was a little shocked at her directness. He had not been quite prepared for it. At this sudden achievement of his desire his magnanimity expanded. He went over to her and took her hand.

"I'm glad t' have you say that, Angela, but I don't want t' hurry you, child. You're in trouble now. We can wait awhile, if you like."

She shook her head. "Waitin' wouldn't make any dif-

ference. But I better tell you," she said, after a pause, "I don't love you like I think I ought to."

Giorgio became uncomfortable at that. He didn't know precisely how to meet the unwelcome frankness of her words. His pride and his magnanimity contended together.

"Tell me, Angela, if you don't love me, what makes you willin' t' marry me?"

"I promised my mother I would. She said love ain't necessary." Before he could reply she added, "Don't take me if you don't want me. But if you want me, I'm willin' t' do as she said, 'cause now she's dead."

Giorgio's mind went out to the dead woman in the other room. He saw her still lying with bare feet and a towel round her head, as he had seen her when he came in. He understood that she had done this great thing for him—it had been her last act. He felt a deep gratitude to her, a deep loyalty. He perceived that by her death the woman had given a quality of inevitability to this marriage that he was now discussing. He could not withdraw, even if he would; she had sacrificed too much. She had, in fact, completed her undertaking—his undertaking. It was left for him and Angela simply to perform a series of formalities. He felt inclined to do his part largely, handsomely; to justify, so far as he might, the loyalty of his ally who was dead.

"Of course I want you," he said. "If you don't love me, I'm sorry. I wish you did. But a man can't have everything; an' your mother was right, o' course. I've got love enough for the two of us. You're good an' you'll be honest. If you marry me it's more'n I deserve, an' it means more t' me than you know. No other woman

could give me as much. It'll make me happy, an' I'll try t' make you happy; an' we'll be able t' get something out o' life, Angela."

She nodded quietly.

"We're engaged, then?" he asked. "We understand each other?"

Again she nodded.

"D'you want t' let the people know?"

"If you want to."

He was silent for a minute, standing beside her, then he said, "I want t' kiss you, child."

She turned a still face toward him and closed her eyes. Giorgio touched her lightly with his hands and kissed her on the lips. He released her at once and turned away, conscious that his caress had evoked no answering pressure. In that moment he could have wept. In that moment he was perfectly in love with the girl, and his love was touched with an unwonted tenderness because she did not love him in return. He perceived the extent of her sacrifice. For the first time in his recollection something deep within him stirred in adoration of the substance of a woman. He was moved to pity, sympathy, awe and passion. He acknowledged in his heart that he was not fit to be the mate of this young and lovely woman, yet he could not then have let her go without violating his instincts as a man. He wanted her intensely.

He turned back to her directly. "Don't ever think I don't love you, Angela," he said. His voice trembled and his hand was extended in a gesture of fealty. "I've got faults enough, child, but don't ever think I don't love you."

"I believe you, Giorgio," she said.

She even tried then to understand that he did love her; but it was beyond her grasp. There was about it something incongruous that her intelligence could not clarify. But what mattered more than understanding was the bare acceptance of the fact, and that was inescapable. She was to be his wife. Her life was set. That was the stuff of which her future was to be made.

In accepting the fact, she achieved a sense of atonement for her mother's death. What troubled her was the great spread of negations that accepting it involved—all the things that must be abandoned and foregone—Joe, her own clear love, all the beauties and glories of which she had dreamed.

She closed her mind against the visions that came crowding, closed her mind to stay her tears; and turning to Giorgio, she said, "Will you tell them, then?"

"Yes. Can I do anythin' for you, Angela?"

"No. There's nothing."

She moved toward the door as she spoke, he opened it for her, and they went down the hall together.

XIV

When old man Santos returned from Melton the following morning, he brought to Joe and Mrs. Santos the news of Mrs. Grania's death. Joe's first reaction to the news was a mild elation. The field of his life, which had heretofore been much cluttered with conditions of one sort and another—a reasonable period of engagement between himself and Angela, numerous conventions vaguely sensed—seemed suddenly to have been cleared of all impediments, and Joe found himself in what appeared to be a new field. He wondered at himself. What had he been waiting for? Why had he not already married Angela? Well, for one thing, there had been Mrs. Grania.

The old woman had never been cordial to him. She had never even spoken to him—had never recognized his existence to that extent; especially, she had never recognized his existence in any possible relation to Angela. Joe knew that she could not be neutral in the circumstances; consequently, her lack of cordiality amounted to opposition. More than once recently she had tacitly acknowledged his existence by interrupting his conversations with her daughter, but these acknowledgments had been as vague and indirect as it was possible to imagine. If the woman's attitude meant anything at all, Joe thought, it meant that she had neither wish nor

inclination to assume the dignities and duties of mother-in-law to him.

His first thought, therefore, on hearing the news of Mrs. Grania's passing—a thought of pity and sorrow for Angela—had already been preceded by a sudden sense of gratification that an actual, though indefinite, opposition had been removed from his immediate path. Now, as he finished his breakfast, his mind was completely occupied with a loyal sympathy for Angela in her grief. He wanted to be near her, that she might have the support of his sympathy and his love.

Old man Santos had a similar thought.

"You goin' over there, Joe, eh?" he asked.

Joe looked up at him, but said nothing.

Santos nodded. "You go," he said. "I'll do the chores."

Joe put on his Mackinaw and cap and went down across the narrow wrist of land, and came at last to the house of his sweetheart, where Death was also.

The sun was brightening through the steam from last night's rain and it struck full upon the Grania house, limning clearly against the unpainted woodwork the motionless banner of the silent knight who for ever rides man down. It was a long black banner—old and turning green at the outer folds, from many years of use—gathered and caught in a little fan at the top. Against this gathering a rosette of faded purple ribbon was fastened with a black silk button, like an unhealthy flower with a black heart.

Joe looked at it with a feeling of distaste. Mainly, he knew death as an abstraction, a thing to be talked about on occasion, but having nothing to do with him.

Ordinarily he could smile at it; but not now, for the worst thing about it was that it always left somebody grieving—like Angela. Death's real triumphs seemed to lie in the pain it inflicted upon the living.

Joe went around to the back of the house. He found the kitchen door open a crack, and he didn't know how to proceed. Should he knock? His hands were restless in his pockets. He peered into the empty kitchen—his first glance into the abode of his sweetheart. At last he pushed the door open, took off his cap, and went in.

The house was very quiet. The silence irked him. He felt like an intruder; he was vaguely afraid of being found there alone. Where was Angela? He had come to see her, and he finally took his courage in his hands and started along the narrow dark hall toward the front of the house.

At the sound of his steps, it seemed, a dim figure rose out of the gloom. It was as if he had evoked out of the smothering shadows of the hall a deeper shadow, silent, sorrowful, sensed rather than perceived, at first, and then perceived, shadowy still, but ghostly too, now, from pallor faintly gleaming about the caverns of great eyes.

Joe was thrilled. He went forward in tense quietness, and realized suddenly, unmistakably, that it was Angela who stood before him. As he moved forward, the climbing sun out of doors slashed through the final tatters of a broken web of mist, struck some wet and shining surface that reflected it again at a new angle, and a beam of light shot through the kitchen window and along the hall, breaking, splintering, gushing about Joe's shoulders, transforming his Mackinaw into a mass of blazonry.

He moved forward, unmindful of the glory about him; and one small shaft, like a random arrow of gold, overshot him, left him untouched, found its mark beyond, lighting the locket on Angela's breast into a tiny shining flame.

She stood quiet as he approached, let him take her hand, suffered him to place his arm about her, and said nothing. Her silence was like a communicating pain, and he was impotent to ease either her sorrow or his own. Suddenly he missed Mrs. Grania very much—wanted to see her in life again, that the pain of his beloved might be soothed. He looked into Angela's face, but he could not enfold her glance in his glance, for she would not give him her eyes.

"Oh, Angel!" he whispered. "Angel!"

She turned then, and he turned beside her, her hand still in his and his arm about her, and they went into the room where the candles burned. They stood beside the coffin and looked together into Mrs. Grania's quiet face. The candle-flames fanned lightly to the breeze of their coming; shadows shifted in and out of those colourless features. Joe knelt down and prayed for the dead woman's soul—prayed sincerely, for the sake of her daughter. When he finished he found that Angela was kneeling beside him.

They rose together. Joe turned to Angela and saw that she was crying. She wept without restraint, letting the tears come as they would, letting them fall as they would. Joe had a swift feeling that the woman in the coffin had not been worthy of such sorrowing as this. Every tear the girl shed cried out to him for solace.

At last he whispered, "Angel! Don't! Don't cry like that!"

He went to her where she stood at her mother's feet, and took her hand; but she drew it away from him in silence. She found her handkerchief and dried her cheeks. She backed against the wall and stood looking at him with strange, great eyes. She seemed frail and slim in her plain black dress—weary and exhausted, as if some deep force, some fundamental vitality had gone out of her.

Joe was filled with pity. There was nothing that he would not then have done to bring her happiness. He stood gazing at her, embarrassed between his great desire and his great impotence.

"Listen, Angel," he said at last, "can't I do anythin' for you? I'd do anythin' I could t' help you."

For a moment she looked at him with deep eyes full of tenderness, sorrow, renunciation.

"You got t' do somethin' for me, Joe," she said. "You got t' leave me alone."

He misunderstood her.

"You mean you want me t' go away now?"

She nodded.

"All right," he said, "I'll go."

He turned as he spoke and picked up his cap; then he paused to hear what she was saying.

"An' you can't come back," she murmured.

"Huh? What d'you mean?"

"You can't come back," she said, "ever."

"No?" he asked, bewildered. For a moment he wondered if her grief had upset her mind; but there was

in her eyes a calmness that assured him of her sanity.

She stood shaking her head quietly. At last she murmured, "Never."

He couldn't understand. He couldn't believe what he seemed to understand. He began to ask her questions—began to probe at her heart to find whatever it was that lay behind her words; and though, for her, it was almost unbearable, she stood and gave an answer that was a blow to him for every questioning blow he hurt her with.

"You mean you're through with me, then?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Why's that? You don't love me any more?"

Her lips wouldn't answer that. She nodded.

"What've I done, Angel? I ain't meant t' hurt you."

"It's nothin'," she said. "I just can't see you any more."

He felt as if he were up against a stone wall. If she didn't want him, what could he do? Yet there must be a reason. He couldn't go away like that.

"This ain't no way t' treat me, Angel," he said. "You know the way I feel about you."

"Yes, I know. But I can't help it, Joe."

For an instant, it seemed to him, she had softened. That word "Joe" had held a faint suggestion of relenting. He looked at her wildly; hope came into his eyes, shone through his deepening fear, galvanized his emotions.

He dropped his cap on the floor, and went toward her. "Angel," he whispered, "you can't do this t' me. What's the matter? Tell me about it. If it'll help you for me t' go away I'll go; but I got t' know what's the matter."

He took her into his arms as he spoke and let his love flow about her like a cloak. He held her, looked into her

eyes, kissed her. She let him take her, let the cloak of his love flow about her, felt the warmth of it, the comfort—the pain. But she made no response, either of word or gesture. He could not move her. It was as if he were trying to persuade a corpse, except for those deep eyes that hurt him. At last he relaxed, discouraged in his effort. He stood at her side with one arm about her, and talked quietly; and as he talked, his other hand toyed with the locket at her throat.

"Listen, Angel," he said. "I've known you about a couple o' months now, an' I've loved you ever since the first time I saw you, over at the chapel—remember?" He paused and looked into her face, ready to smile; but she gave no sign to encourage him. Her eyes were on the shining locket in his fingers.

"All along I've expected t' marry you," he went on, "an' you knew it. I ain't much of a fellah, an' I ain't got much t' offer you, but I can work, an' I will, an' some day we can have a place of our own. You won't need t' be ashamed o' me, Angel. You ain't ever been ashamed o' me yet, have you?"

He paused, but she made no sign; her eyes were still cast down.

"You know, Angel, I been a better fellah since I come t' the Fist. I used t' be kind o' wild in N'York, I guess, but that was before I met you. Now, if we can get married, I'll never be wild again. You'll be happy, 'cause I'll be straight always, an' work for you. I love you, an' you know it, an' I ain't goin' away an' give you up without a fight."

He paused again; his fingers were still busy with the locket. He waited, hoping that she would respond, but

she neither spoke nor looked up. Her faculties were concentrated into a point of intense attention—there was a strange fascination for her in the spectacle of Joe's strong, brown fingers fumbling with that shining gift from the man whom she was going to marry. Joe's fingers kept turning the locket back and forth, back and forth, now hiding it under his thumb, now turning it visible on his thumb-nail. It came and went like an eye with a fiery light, turning, winking, shifting, swaying—like the eye of a reptile charmed. If the spell should relax, the thing would strike—swiftly, horribly, fatally.

She sank into a kind of stupor of fascination, watching that bright eye's movement. It seemed to her dimly that Joe's words were the incantation that rendered it harmless. She wished that he would begin to speak again—would continue to talk without ceasing. But he said nothing, and still the fiery eyes went swaying, shifting, back and forth, harmless under his touch. In her exhausted state she half dreamed, watching; waited, impotent, for the thing to strike.

And as she waited she grew afraid—became terrified at the imminence of that horrible swift gesture that she imagined. Her breath swelled in and out of her lungs, her bosom rose and fell to its surging, she began to tremble in her terror; her gaze followed, unwavering, unwinking, the short, gentle motions of that fiery eye.

Joe felt her rising agitation and renewed his pleading. "Tell me why you want me t' go away?" he asked.

As he spoke he dropped the locket from his fingers. It fell against her breast. At that gentle impact and the sound of his voice, her being was startled to the core. With a little frightened cry she started out of her dream,

escaped from her illusion, faced the reality of his importuning presence, faced again the terrible necessity of sending him away. Emotions had been crowding within her—sorrow upon sorrow, fear, terror, despair. She was worn out, grown a little wild.

She pushed Joe away; she drew back and stood rigid against the wall; her eyes were dark and flashing.

"You got t' go," she cried, "an' you can't ever come near me again. I'm goin' t' marry Giorgio Vinti. I'm goin' . . ."

"Giorgio Vinti!" Joe exclaimed.

"Yes. I promised my mother I'd marry him."

She turned her great eyes away from him and gazed into the waxy face in the coffin.

After a moment Joe recovered from his amazement, understood what she had said, realized what she meant. He too turned and contemplated the quiet face in the coffin. Mrs. Grania had done this. Yes, *she had done this!* He would have liked a chance to fight it out with her; it angered him to know that he could never have such a chance. She would always be serene and passive. She had made sure of her victory and withdrawn, still ignoring his existence.

He stooped and picked up his cap from the floor; then he turned back to Angela. He felt a sudden, hot desire to conquer the dead old woman's peace and assurance.

"You don't love Vinti, you love me," he said to Angela. "You been sold—I see it—sold by your mother t' him 'cause he's rich. That's part o' the price on your neck, prob'ly. Well, listen, Angel, your mother's dead; she can't make you marry him, even if you did promise.

"I'll save you from that bloody bully," he went on, "if you'll only let me. Give him back his chains an' lockets! You're too good for him. You're too good for me, too; but you love me, anyway, an' you don't love him. That's the difference. You don't love him, do you? Will you marry me, Angel? I'll save you from this!"

Angela went down on her knees at the foot of her mother's coffin, and wept. "No," she said. "I promised her I'd marry him, an' I got to. I made a vow."

"You ain't got to," Joe said. "She can't make you—no one can make you if you don't want to. Do you want to? I'll save you. I'll do anything you want."

Angela's head fell forward against the foot of the coffin. "You don't know!" she sobbed. "You don't know!"

"I know enough," Joe said. "I know she sold you."

"No, she didn't! An' she didn't get anythin' for me!"

"Don't be foolish! My God! She wouldn't *give you away*—not to Vinti!"

"Oh, you don't know what happened!" she cried.

Joe was desperate. "Well, what happened?"

"Listen, Joe," she said. She turned to him and tried to be calm. "Listen. I didn't want t' marry him, an' I killed her."

Again Joe wondered if she was losing her mind.

"Look, Angel," he said quietly, "you mean t' say you killed your mother?"

She nodded her assent, sobbing. "An' now I got t' do like she wanted me to, 'cause I promised her I would. I made a vow."

"Does Vinti know you—killed her?"

"Yes. An' we're engaged. I got t' marry him."

"You have not!" he cried.

"I have! You don't know. I killed her an' I got t' pay. She was my mother, an' I killed her!"

She was overwhelmed by a sudden new access of woe. She sank back, resting on her heels, and her head was bowed almost into her lap. Her body swayed like a tree, in a tempest of grief. Joe fell on his knees beside her and put his arms about her. He raised her up, held her close, kissed her again and again.

"God, Angel!" he cried. "Are you goin' t' let 'em take you away from me like this?"

"I can't help it," she wailed. "I killed her an' I got t' pay! Oh, Joe, help me! Help me!"

She was pitiful in her obstinate determination of sacrifice.

"You won't let me help you," he said tenderly. "What can I do?"

"I need you, Joe! I'll always need you! Oh, Joe!"

Turning toward him, she threw her arms about him and clung to him convulsively, sobbing, trembling, on the verge of hysteria. He placed her in a chair and soothed her with his lips and with his hands.

"Listen," he said. "Don't let 'em marry you t' Vinti yet. You're all in; you're tired out. You don't know what you're doin'. Make 'em wait before marryin' you to him. Make 'em wait."

She sobbed and nodded.

"An' look, Angel! You didn't kill your mother. She jus' dropped dead—your father told ol' man Santos so. You couldn't help that! Make 'em wait, an' you'll see things different. I want you, Angel. An' you want me.

There ain't anythin' else t' be said about who you'll marry. You wait—don't let 'em hurry you! We'll ask Father Pasquale what's right."

There was a sound of steps coming along the hall. Joe rose and took his cap from the floor.

"I'm goin' now," he said, "but I'll see you later. Don't let 'em rush you into anythin'. Jus' keep rememberin', Angel, you're goin' t' marry me."

As he started for the door she stood up.

"No! Joe!" she cried. "Don't ever come back. I promised her I'd marry him, an' I got t' pay."

Joe paused. "Think what I'll have t' pay!" he said. "If you let Vinti buy you—if you marry him when you don't love him, I'll never trouble you again—don't worry!"

She sank back into the chair as he finished, and Joe started toward the door. As he moved, his eyes caught a glimpse of Mrs. Grania's face in the coffin. It seemed to him that there was the flicker of an expression on those waxen features—the flicker of an expression ironically acknowledging his existence and his defeat. It was the flicker of but an instant, both on those dead features and in his mind. He moved to the doorway, angry, sad, bewildered; but before passing out of the room, he was obliged to pause again, to let Rosie Rosario enter and look upon the dead.

XV

Father Pasquale's parish was on the mainland; the little chapel at the Fist was an outpost. Mr. Grania had telephoned to him about the death of his wife, and in the afternoon of the following day the little priest arrived at the island. He gathered up the threads of circumstance attending Mrs. Grania's death, and went alone into the little chapel and prayed in the cold stillness. He was to spend the night, as he often did when the weather was bad, at the house of old man Santos.

After supper there—an elaborate meal in honour of the priest's presence—Father Pasquale retired to his room, Joe and the old man went out to finish up the chores, and Mrs. Santos cleared away and washed the dishes. Then, one by one, they drifted back again and became a group in the ample kitchen.

A kind of apprehension hovered about these four people. Because of their sympathy with Joe, the Santos couple and he were, in a manner, a group by themselves—a group who were about to demand from the priest something like justice. And he, the judge, was apprehensive, for he was afraid that they might ask more, in the name of justice, than he could grant them.

At last old man Santos began:

"You've heard the news that Angela's goin' t' marry?"

The priest nodded. "Yes, she's going to marry Giorgio Vinti, I understand," he said.

"D'you like that match, Father?"

"It doesn't require my approval, except to see that the sacrament of the church isn't violated."

"It would be!" Mrs. Santos broke in.

Father Pasquale shook his head. "I don't think so," he said.

"No?" the old woman cried; and Joe then cast at the priest his first look of wounded trust.

"The parties are of legal age, they have both been known to me for several years, they are Catholics, and they are determined to marry together. What more is there?"

"What makes 'em so determined?" Joe asked suddenly.

"Do you know, my son?"

"No, I don't; but I know it ain't love."

"No? And how do you know that, Joe?"

Joe hesitated.

"How do you know that, Joe?" Father Pasquale repeated.

"Angela's been goin' with me," he stated.

Father Pasquale looked at him tenderly for a minute. "Do you love Angela?" he asked.

Joe looked into the priest's face. "Yes," he said frankly, "I want t' marry her."

Father Pasquale shook his head in pity.

"Young love," he said, "is a strange thing, a wonderful thing, a terrible thing." He turned toward Santos and was speaking to him. "Here's Joe," he went on; "he loves Angela; he thinks Angela loves him, and no doubt he has reason to think so. But she's planning to marry another man. Old people like you and me cry out against that; we want to prevent it; we want to see

youth mated with youth; we want to see love satisfied. But Angela's own mother approved of this other match before she died, her father approves of it, and she herself insists on it. What can outside people like you and me do when things are like that?"

Santos made no answer.

"She's gone crazy! She don't know what she's doin'!" Joe exclaimed.

"Do you mean that?" the priest asked quietly.

"Yes. She's gone crazy over her mother's death or somethin'," Joe answered.

"Tell me what you mean, Joe."

"Well, look, Father," Joe said, growing more confident and more frank. "Angela told me this mornin' she still loved me; an' then she went on sayin' how she'd got t' marry Vinti 'cause she'd promised her mother to. That ain't sense."

"But perhaps she did promise her mother? I understand she even made a vow."

"I don't care. Her mother's dead. An' anyway, her mother couldn't decide for her who she'd marry."

"Listen, Joe. I agree that it would be wrong for Angela's mother to make her marry against her will; but if she promised her mother, don't you think she ought to keep that promise?"

"No. 'Cause her mother was wrong."

"Ah," said Father Pasquale, "who knows that?"

"I do!" Joe cried. "She made her marry him 'cause he's got money. D'you suppose she'd 'a' made her marry him if he was poor?"

"I don't know, Joe. Giorgio loves Angela too, remember. He went to Angela's father and mother and

told them so, and they accepted him as a suitor. Angela has accepted their judgment. I wonder if we should do any good now by interfering—even if we could interfere."

Joe looked at the priest, disappointed and desperate. He saw that this judge, in whom he had placed his trust, was against him.

"Wait!" Santos said. "If it's money, we can help Joe. He can have money if he needs it for a thing like this. Th' ol' woman an' I don't need all we got, an' I'd rather give money t' Joe than anyone else—for a thing like this."

He looked at Mrs. Santos as he spoke. She nodded in agreement. "Joe an' the church," she said.

Father Pasquale held up his hand. Joe looked down at the floor, unmoved.

"Let us consider," the priest said. "I like Joe. He's a good lad. I'd like to see him marry Angela. But don't think this is a question of money. Even if Vinti's money had anything to do with it in the first place, it isn't a question of money now." He looked quietly from one to another.

"Giorgio loves the girl," he went on, "and, whatever their reason, her people agreed to the match. They had a right to do that—they had a right to their own judgment. Then Angela agreed to marry Vinti. That was a promise given, a vow made. Whatever made her give that promise—make that vow—doesn't matter to us now. Angela believes that promise binds her; therefore, I too think that it does. Neither Joe nor any of the rest of us can set it aside. Only Angela could set it aside, and then deal with her own conscience. But she doesn't set it aside. Then what are we going to do? Shall we interfere with her conscience, lead her away

from the path that she sees as the right path, into a path that happens to suit us better? Shall we do this against her will, or by overcoming her will?"

"Yes!" Joe cried. "Her mother made her promise against her will!"

"If that is true, Joe, Mrs. Grania has gone to answer for it before the throne of God. Can any one of us take the responsibility of answering for the life of another?"

He paused for a while and then continued. "No, some men live by their inclinations, their appetites, their passions; some live by their consciences. To live and act according to the dictates of conscience and the teachings of the church is the best any man can do. I, for one, as a man and as a priest, would be afraid to try to draw Angela away from what she herself honestly sees to be right."

"D'you think Vinti's followin' his conscience?" Joe asked belligerently.

"I don't know, Joe; do you? I hope he is."

"Huh!" Joe sneered. "He ain't got any conscience. He's rotten! He's rotten! He's always had women in his house. He ain't fit t' look at Angela. That dead ol' woman sold her! She ain't marryin' him 'cause she loves him—I know it! She's marryin' him 'cause that fierce ol' woman made her; an' *she* had her eye on Vinti's money, all right!"

Joe dropped his face into his hands.

"My son," said Father Pasquale quietly, "let him who is without sin amongst us cast stones at Vinti. As for judging Mrs. Grania, who is dead, God alone can read the hearts of his creatures."

There was silence in the room for several minutes.

The clock wearily ticked away the thoughts of these four people. Outside, the wind could be heard buffeting against the house in a kind of immense merriness.

"There's nothin', then, we can do t' help Joe?" Mr. Santos asked at last. "We jus' got t' let this go on?"

Father Pasquale spread out his hands. "There is one thing," he said; "we can pray."

They all sat silent again. The clock ticked loudly; outside the Falstaffian winds went buffeting by.

At last Joe lifted a haggard face out of his hands, and without looking at any of the others, or speaking, he took his coat and hat and went out into the starlit night.

The night was luminous. The blustering winds had blown the sky clean, except where the Milky Way, like a trail of silver dust, hung suspended in an eternity of quietness. Stars innumerable gleamed against the velvet texture of the heavens.

Joe walked abroad, unconscious of the aspect of the night, unconscious of the way he took, and mounted along the rising rim of the Fist, alone in all the world—above all the world.

He was consumed by a great bitterness. He wanted to think, but he could not think. It seemed incredible that he must lose Angela, and yet he felt profoundly that he had already lost her. For the first time in his life he tasted of despair.

He sat on the seat of the gods and looked down over the dreary settlement, where lights were already going out like golden stars. He thought of Angela standing by the body of that dead woman who, though her mother, had fastened upon her woe and a life of shame. He thought of Mrs. Grania, the eager, nervous, scolding little woman

who would be buried in the morning—removed for ever from the consequences of her fanaticism. He hated her as he had never hated her in life. There seemed to be some deceitful, sneaking quality in her; something treacherous in the way she had created this situation to suit her and had then withdrawn beyond the reach of all consequences. A sudden anger flamed up in Joe at the thought of her calm safety and her unending inability to give Angela's promise back to her.

In memory he saw Angela standing beside that treacherous old woman who was dead, and she appeared more lovely, more tenderly beautiful than ever before. She stood as Joe had seen her that morning, in her plain black dress, with eyes grown great to hold their sorrow; and as he looked she seemed more sad than when she had last spoken to him, sending him away. He seemed to behold her, dim but distinct, in a kind of vision—as if his mortal sense of sight penetrated the shabby walls of her home down there and beheld her in the flesh, remotely visible, with yellow candlelight about her figure and illuminating her pitiful sad face.

Joe stared, unconscious of the wildness about him—the great winds whirling across the promontory where he sat, the sea crashing and crying below him—sat and stared, enthralled, at the poignant beauty of that dear familiar figure; and as he stared she met his eyes—met and held them in a long glance of deep devotion. That look was like a cry to him, seeming to imply her reliance on his strength and his allegiance. Suddenly she held her arms out toward him in a swift and simple gesture of desire. Her body cried out in that gesture, her soul was pleading in her eyes; everything she was cried out to him of love.

In a moment her gesture dissolved and her arms dropped at her sides; she shook her head sadly and turned away. His vision of her began to fade out in the dim distance beyond the transparent candlelight.

At her going, Joe leaped to his feet, stricken with despair. He raised his arms in an arresting gesture; he called her name wildly—"Angel! Angel!"—but the sound was lost, out upon the sea. His pain, his defeat and despair were focused in that futile cry. The distant figure that he had tried to hail did not pause or turn but, even as he strove to hold it, became invisible.

Joe sank back upon the barren ledge of rock and, burying his face in his hands, he wept with the tears of strength overdone.

Was his whole life to be like this? he vaguely wondered. He suffered in an agony of loneliness. What was the good of life so stark? His people back in the Vermont hills made no appeal to his sentiments. The crowds of fellows and girls of his own kind that he had known in New York were gone—he could not now visualize them or remember their names. His whole life had been filled with vague and shadowy figures remembered as from a dream. He was alone. He had a premonition that he would always be alone. Angela, the one reality of his existence, had left him.

He raised his head at last, rose and mounted to the edge of the cliff. Here the winds beat upon him like a host of furies. Below, the black waters rolled in everlasting restlessness; in the cold distance above him the stars quivered silently. In a flash—like an inspiration—Joe seemed to sense the meaning of life. The great heart of created things whispered a message to him out of its

mysterious wisdom—Joe seemed to catch the sharp word "PAIN," and then, soon, the gentler phrase "PAIN AND ENDURANCE."

He turned away from the edge of the cliff and looked down into the blackness of the darkened settlement. Only one light remained visible—one light moving to and fro, like a slow firefly with a steady yellow light. Joe's eyes followed it unconsciously for a time, and he realized at last that old man Santos, lantern in hand, was searching for him with his faded, sympathetic eyes.

He descended the face of the cliff, found the old man searching, and took him quietly by the arm. Together they went into the house and retired to their rooms.

But before Joe went to sleep, there was the sound of a light tapping at his door, and before he had time to answer, somebody, indistinguishable, entered and sat down at his side on the bed.

"My son!" said a voice, and Joe knew that it was Father Pasquale who had come in. "My son!" the priest repeated; and he felt for the young man's shoulder.

Joe was filled with a poignancy of pain; this sympathy almost made him cry out; it was keen—like the touch of an open hand on a raw wound in his flesh.

"I am praying for you, Joe, and I'm honest with you. If I could help you, I would; but matters of conscience are not for man's interference."

"I want t' do what's right," Joe murmured, "but I love her, Father—I love her true an' honest."

Father Pasquale's hand pressed his shoulder.

"She sent me away," Joe continued. " 'Don't ever come back,' she said. An' then she said, 'I need you; I'll al-

ways need you.' What does that mean, Father? I don't understand."

"She needs your love, Joe. A woman's love is not the same as a man's love. Women are different—they are the mothers of men, and that is something which we men can never understand. It is one of the mysteries of God. Because she has loved you she perhaps needs to have you near, that she may always know that you're safe, even without her direct protection as a wife. She is no doubt sorrowing over you now; and you must honour her because she is sacrificing everything—even her happiness and yours—to the dictates of her conscience."

Joe made no reply. He was awed by a new splendour in this woman that he loved and had lost. He was suddenly amazedly aware of the gulf that lay between his own stained ideals and the high white banner of her virtue.

"Have you prayed?" Father Pasquale asked at last.

"No. But I will—now."

"Yes, pray for her, Joe, as I have prayed for you both."

The priest went away, closing the door quietly, leaving Joe alone in the darkness. There was nothing in the world Joe would not then have done for Angela; he felt humble before his present vision of her. In a kind of dedication he pledged himself to her; he determined in his heart that her decision in their great affair should be his law; that he would help her when he could; that he would remain near her always, watchful and patient.

XVI

The next morning the black coffin containing Mrs. Grania's body was placed in the ground beside the little chapel. There were no carriages, there was no hearse. The dark, trailing assemblage of people walked from the house to the chapel, with Father Pasquale and his acolytes, in cassocks and surplices, at the head, one of the lads bearing the great brass crucifix aloft. The coffin followed, borne on slender staves by six young men. Behind it Angela walked wearily, on her right and left hands her father and Giorgio. After them marched the Gossips, three abreast, quiet and observant; then, in groups and pairs, friends and neighbours straggled along, busy with talk.

Giorgio Vinti's attendance at the mass was an unprecedented occurrence; and Rosie Rosario, seeing him there at Angela's side, emerged from the isolation of her despair—driven out by the fever of hatred in her soul.

She had heard no word of gossip regarding her visit to Giorgio on the previous Sunday night, so she knew that he had not told, as he had threatened to do; but at first she did not care. Her disappointment, her failure to move Vinti had been all that mattered—the end of splendid hopes. Had he told, and had the women of the Fist sneered at her in consequence, Rosie was prepared

to brazen it out with them, to give them sneer for sneer. But he had not told. He had answered her instead with a subtler definiteness. Consequently, Rosie's hatred of Vinti was intense and, seeking a vent, it turned naturally in the direction of Angela, who without effort had won the place that Rosie desired, who was now accepting, with a kind of heroic fortitude, all and more than all that Rosie had irrevocably lost.

The two girls had been friends. Rosie had seen Angela grow up in beauty, unblemished by the angers and stormy desires which she had herself known and still knew, and she had taken pleasure in the serene purity of spirit that marked her young friend. Angela's innocence was so opposite to her own tumultuous longings that she was bound to be attracted by it because of the very fact of being unable to understand it. Rosie would look at Angela quizzically sometimes, amazed at the extraordinary simplicity of this girl who lived in an environment similar to her own. At other times there passed in Rosie's mind a little sneer, for Angela's goodness seemed preposterous—so delicate and white, so impervious. Then again, she found Angela a little stupid. But always, constant and settled under these passing flurries, Rosie's image of Angela stood, niched like the image of a minor saint, lovely, simple and pure, on a mental pedestal.

When Joe arrived at the Fist the two girls had perceived him, had greeted him in their respective characteristic manners. Angela, all innocence, flashed her innocence before him with a blush and a bright light in her eyes that made him gasp, winning him without calculation at that first encounter. Rosie, more subtle,

had paused and read him, studied him, and understood him; had exchanged with him a swift understanding glance, and had hoped for his later approach. But he had not come. His unhesitating choice of her friend had piqued Rosie, but she had finally relinquished him to Angela, even in her thoughts, and had gone her way without interfering with Joe's decision and her friend's interest.

But now Angela had abandoned Joe. Rosie had heard her send him away finally. At that her interest in him revived, and she began to watch for whatever move he might make, knowing, as she did, that young men do not die of broken hearts. She despised Angela for a fool for letting him go, and yet she hated her for having had the chance to take him; and she hated her more as she realized that her young friend had only let him go to accept the more important, permanent thing—the place as Giorgio Vinti's wife—which she had herself tried for and failed to grasp.

As Rosie continued to contemplate Joe, her passion inevitably rose. But she could not attempt to inveigle him—not yet—she must wait for that. And while she waited, her emotion and her hatred, compounding together into a poisonous venom, was spat in the direction of Angela. She was tense with the pressure of that poison in her soul. She could wait, because her thoughts, hovering about the image of Joe, saw him not as a lover, but as a husband; she saw him always in the glow of that intense desire. But she could not wait in idleness. She was determined to again try to snatch something from Fate, and she did what she could to hasten the encounter.

Casually, here and there among her neighbours, she repeated the overheard private things that had passed between Angela and Joe on their last morning together. Those statements were like the audible cry of Rosie's being for freedom—an instinctive propaganda against her enemy. What she was to gain by this attack on Angela she did not definitely know; she did not reason how it was to help her; she turned upon Angela with instinctive animosity. Actually, she did not expect Joe to come to her for solace in his present despair. She knew that she must find a way to bring him to her. And as she told her subtle story, putting Angela in an equivocal position, she watched for her opportunity with Joe. She was intensely cautious, careful lest she allow herself to be hurried or take some false step.

Her extreme caution increased her difficulties almost beyond solution. What was she going to do to bring this Joe, who was still suffering, no doubt, from his recent dismissal, into the regions of her amorous fascination? Unexpectedly her brother Manuel came, without intention, to her aid.

The spring was approaching; Manuel had saved some money and was planning his anticipated escape from the island. He had in him, as Rosie also had, a capacity for bigger things than the conditions of the island provided, and he had besides, as against the normal hesitancies of a woman of Rosie's education, a young man's courage and the instinct to dominate. He had a great curiosity about the cities of the mainland—Boston, Chicago, New York—an intense desire to test them with his physical strength and his mental ability.

Though he expected to work, he had determined that

he should not be completely dependent upon the whims of the cities, that he should not approach them abjectly. He would go to them seeking, but with money in his pocket as a charm against the possible vicissitudes of their capriciousness. While he had no doubt of his ability to command them according to his needs and his desires, it might take a little time, he admitted to himself; so he planned to go with two hundred and fifty dollars between him and any untoward conditions that he might encounter.

He had decided to go to New York; the time had almost come; but he had not yet provided himself with a sufficient amount of money to leave him two hundred and fifty dollars after he had appropriated various sums for clothes and other necessary expenses.

"Got any money?" he asked Rosie one day.

"Money? No," she said. "What for?"

He glanced at her with an amused smile.

"It's time for me t' be gettin' out," he said, "but I'm short o' cash."

Rosie went about her work and said nothing.

"You know I'm goin', don't you?" he asked.

"When you goin'?"

"Soon's I can get enough money."

"It ain't goin' t' help me none for you t' go," she remarked. "It's on'y goin' t' make it harder for me."

"I can't help that."

"Well, I can't help it either, if you ain't got enough money."

"Look here, Rosie," he said seriously, "you got t' help me!"

"What d'you mean—I got to? I'm helpin' you enough, I guess, keepin' my mouth shut."

"That's all right, but you got t' help me more. You got money, an' what d'you want it for? You can't spend it here," he sneered.

"Huh!" she sneered back. "Spendin' it ain't havin' it. I could spend it if I wanted. I'd rather keep it."

Manuel laughed genially. "What's the good o' keepin' it?" he asked.

Rosie had a sudden memory.

"There ain't any use o' keepin' it," she answered, "if it'll get you somethin' you want more, but what's the good o' givin' it away for nothin'?"

Manuel was amused. He saw the truth of her argument, for he thought less of money himself just then than of a great many things that it would buy—especially the "good time" he intended to have; but he wanted money badly in order to secure those other things. He looked at his sister and asked, raising his eyebrows, "I ain't got anythin' you want more'n your money, have I, Rosie?"

Rosie was silent for a minute, moving about her work with preoccupied nervousness.

"Have I, Rosie?" Manuel asked again.

She stopped and looked at him.

"You want t' get away," she said at last, "where you can live different, don't you?"

"Yes," he said, "an' I'm goin'."

"Well, I want t' live different too—jus' as much as you do. I want—I want t' get married an' have a home o' my own."

Manuel laughed good-naturedly.

"Go to it, Rosie!" he said. "I don't blame you. It's time. But you can't marry me!"

"No, an' I don't want to," she retorted.

"So you're savin' up your money for that, eh! Got the fellah picked out?"

"Yes," she admitted.

"Good for you! Who is he?"

"Listen, Manuel, where you goin'?" she asked with apparent irrelevancy.

"N'York."

He gazed at her with renewed interest. Evidently she had something that she wanted to say. He watched her desire and her hesitation contending together.

"You don't know anythin' about N'York," she said.

"Well, I'll know all about it soon."

"Look," she said. "I should think you'd want t' find out somethin' about it before you go."

"Huh?"

"Santos' Joe was in N'York."

"Oh!" he said quietly, nodding his head. "I see! Santos' Joe! That's a good idea, Rosie, both ways. I ought t' get him over to the house, eh, t' talk about N'York?"

"Why not? He could tell you lots."

Manuel laughed agreeably, and approaching his sister, he patted her on the shoulder.

"I wish you luck, Rosie. I sure wish you luck! But," he asked, still patting her shoulder, "what's that got t' do with me gettin' some money?"

Rosie looked up into his face. Then she turned her head away with a nod of consent. "How much?" she asked.

Manuel smiled. "How much will *you* say?"

Rosie shook her head vigorously. "How much?" she repeated.

"How much will *you* say?" Manuel again asked quietly.

"Twenty dollars."

"Oh, Rosie! Make it thirty!"

She shook her head. "Twenty," she said.

He stopped patting her shoulder. "Make it thirty," he demanded.

"Twenty-five!" she conceded.

"He ought t' be worth . . ."

"Twenty-five!" she interrupted. "No more."

Manuel laughed. "All right," he said, "I'll see what I can do with your friend."

"My friend! I don't know him! I don't know him, Manuel."

"No? How d'you know you want him, then?"

"I know," she said.

"Well, you'll have t' give him a drink when he comes."

Rosie nodded.

"An' you better think up some things t' ask him 'bout N'York," he suggested.

Rosie tossed her head. "Bring him!" she said.

"I'd do more'n that for twenty-five dollars—for you, Rosie."

He went out, laughing as he went, and Rosie heard him go whistling across the yard.

Then she waited.

It was entirely true that for twenty-five dollars Manuel would do more than she had asked. He was ordinarily a cool, clear-headed young man, but his escape

to the city had become a mania. There was no sign of a maniac about him, however, as he approached Joe. So suave was his invitation, so keen were his interest and his anticipation, Joe fell at once into a co-operative mood and agreed to call at the Rosario house that night.

When he arrived Manuel greeted him with expansive friendliness. They sat down in the kitchen and began to talk. Joe had brought along an old creased map of New York, which he spread on the kitchen table. Very soon Rosie came in, and Manuel rose to the occasion.

"D'you know my sister Rosie, Joe?"

Joe stood up, smiling, his eyes fixed on Rosie's.

"I've seen her before," he said; then to Rosie, "Glad t' meet you."

Rosie smiled gaily. "I'm comin' in t' hear about N'York," she said.

"Say, listen, Rosie," Manuel remarked, "Joe could talk better if he had somethin' t' drink."

"You like some wine?" she said brightly to Joe.

"Sure," he said, laughing. "I don't mind."

Rosie brought a bottle of wine and filled the tumblers. Joe spread out his map so that Broadway ran on, block after block, across the table, till it finally ended abruptly against the Rosario kitchen wall. Joe talked; on one side of him sat Rosie, tremulous, and on the other side sat her brother, watching her covertly with amused interest, and wishing that he could earn twenty-five dollars as easily as this every day.

Joe showed them on the map the wharf at which Manuel's steamer would tie up, indicated elevated and subway lines, led his listeners a short distance up Broadway, pointing out the City Hall, the Woolworth Tower,

14th and 23rd Streets as he went, mentioned the Metropolitan Tower; but most intimately, for Manuel's specific information, he showed them the wide length of Canal Street and associated thoroughfares—Thompson, Grand, Desbrosses—and a certain spacious West Side square, bleak and deserted on Sundays, where he and his gang used to shoot craps.

"I guess maybe you'll find 'em there yet," Joe said. "But maybe not. Things change faster in N'York than they do on the island."

Then he went on to lead them through the intricacies of the East Side—the Bowery and Chinatown—showed them where the Chambers Street bus line ran under the great arches of the Municipal Building, indicated the Navy Yard across a narrow strip of water, marked where the great bridges ran to their foundations. Then he suddenly shifted back to the busy river between Manhattan and New Jersey—its ferries, the transatlantic liners moving majestically up and down, the exciting hurry of its congested traffic, the sparkle and exhilaration of its sunlit expanses. He mentioned the sky-line of the city that he had watched so many times as it emerged or faded behind banks of fog or mist, and he pointed out where, dimly seen, the Goddess of Liberty stood with her high-held torch.

Before Joe had talked many minutes, Manuel's interest in these previsions of the field of his coming adventures put Rosie out of his mind. He forgot to watch her. And she, absorbing from Joe something of the glamour of the metropolis, was constantly aware of Joe himself. When he rose at last to go he stood trans-

figured for her in the reflected dazzling brightness of New York.

Joe bade them good night, Rosie asked him to come again; and Manuel, wakened from the daze of his imaginings, took his guest by the hand.

"Come again," he said. "Great stuff! I could listen t' you talk about N'York all night."

When Joe had gone, Rosie asked, "You're glad he came, eh, Manuel?"

"You bet!" he said. "He's got me all excited. Oh, Rosie, I'm for N'York! When do I get my twenty-five?"

She waved her hand. "He knows N'York, all right," she said. "I'd like t' hear him talk again."

Manuel nodded. "I'll bring him," he promised. "Rosie, you're all right."

A week later, proving to be as good as his word, Manuel again brought Joe to the house, and again the three of them went up and down Broadway on the map, found Washington Square, took a green bus up Fifth Avenue, tramped through Central Park, and viewed the Hudson from Grant's Tomb. They wandered here and there on the East Side and the West Side, visited the Aquarium, and watched the crowds about the Battery.

But when, still later, Joe called at the Rosario house for the third time, he went of his own volition.

XVII

During these weeks Giorgio Vinti was the busiest man on the island. He had made several trips to Providence for the purpose of purchasing gear, had arranged with the Island Transportation people for additional storage space in their warehouse, had purchased a horse and a small Ford truck, had had his telephone connected up, had induced as many men among his neighbours as he could to go to work for him, and had set them at the task of preparing his old gear for the season's work. His dories came out of the shed; the beach and waters were busy with his extensive energies. Three traps were set out early, and he had buoys and markings already placed for seven others. He had hired half a dozen men from the mainland to come down and work for him for the summer. Promptly after the first of April, when the additional men arrived, he got his lobster pots into the water, started the construction of his fish-pound, and rushed the laying of his other traps.

In the midst of all this work, early in April, one of the fishing-steamers of the Trust nosed its way up the bay. It stood off, drifting, steaming slowly up and down, and sent out half a dozen dories to make experimental catches. The dories were out on three different days, and the excitement of Giorgio and his men rose to fever pitch. They worked like mad at their job, watching these in-

truders meanwhile with the interest of enmity. Then the Trust's boat drew in its dories and quietly steamed away, leaving Vinti's men in a state of relaxation, feeling like victors who had won a fight. But Vinti knew that they had won nothing.

During these weeks, too, Giorgio had been bothered about the new house. Mr. Grania had reminded him about the new house, and in spite of the pressing threat of the Fish Trust, Giorgio had agreed to start things at once. He had called upon Angela for help, but he found her incapable of grasping his idea of the new structure; she had no experience of what a fine house should be like, and she seemed to have neither imagination nor desires regarding her future abode. In desperation Giorgio had called upon an architect to prepare a tentative plan; and as this was an unheard-of thing at the Fist, he finally felt that his house had actually been started right.

But mostly he was worried about his marriage. That was the thing which, if he could have had his way, he would have attended to first. But he was not allowed to have his way. Father Pasquale declared that it would be unseemly to hurry, so soon after Mrs. Grania's death; Mr. Grania said that his wife would have wanted the new house started first; Angela quietly begged for time.

In spite of all his hard work and his irritations, Giorgio was as kind and gentle with Angela as a man could be. He was frequently at the Grania house for a while in the evenings, he brought gifts for the girl whenever he returned from the mainland, and once he took her to Providence with him, that she might shop for her wedding in the great stores. It was on that day that he

bought her the small, clear diamond set in a ring.

They stood together before the long glass case in the jeweller's shop, and Angela, with many hesitations, selected a ring from the pair of trays presented for their examination. Giorgio had told her, with a large air, to choose; and she, embarrassed, chose one that was really not quite so large as she would have liked. She was bewildered about the probable price of these points of colour that gleamed delightfully, and she did not dare to choose according to her real desire. But it happened that the one she chose was a flawless small stone of good colour and cutting.

Angela pointed to it. The clerk courteously measured her finger, and then he measured the ring. Miraculously, it fitted. Giorgio took it from the clerk's large white hand and slipped it on to Angela's slim finger. Then he held her hand up before him and looked at the gem.

"There!" he exclaimed. "It looks better there than in the case, eh?"

The sparkling beauty of the stone drew a smile to Angela's lips, and Giorgio, seeing that she was pleased, seeing that she smiled, turned to the salesman and asked, "How much?"

Angela's smile died at the man's reply; it was an unbelievable figure. But Giorgio, undaunted, brought his thick pocket-book out from an inner pocket, and counted out the necessary number of bills.

"You ought to have a guard for that ring," the salesman suggested. "Though small, it's a very good stone."

Giorgio bought the guard. Then he led the way, pompous but smiling, toward the door of the great shop, where the small boy in a grey uniform with black frogs

and brass buttons, opened the door with his usual deference for their exit.

Just outside, Giorgio stopped.

"You like it, eh, Angela—the ring?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "It's lovely."

"Then be happy, an' smile for me sometimes."

She was happy and she smiled—smiled up into Giorgio's face.

"Look!" he said in Portuguese. "Look! The stone is bright, eh?" He took her hand as he spoke, and held it. "Yes, it is bright. Like my love, Angela—bright! But the size—bah! That is not like my love for you, child. It is too little to be like my love. My love is bright *and* big."

He kept his eyes on Angela as he spoke. She blushed under his look. She sensed sincerity in his voice, and when he had finished she said, "You're good t' me, Giorgio. I ain't worth so much."

"You're worth all I got," he said. Then he squeezed her hand and turned away, and they walked down the street together.

Giorgio's ample generosity, his apparent clear intent to perform all that he had agreed, had the effect, finally, of advancing the time of his wedding. With Father Pasquale his exemplary conduct began to tip the scales. He came to see that the satisfaction of Giorgio's honourable desires was not incompatible with a sympathetic remembrance of Mrs. Grania. The little priest felt, moreover, that a man like Giorgio would be better married, and that he needed now, in all his hard work and worry, whatever comfort and encouragement he could gather from the married state. Consequently, he at last sup-

ported Giorgio in his contention for a marriage in May instead of in June.

Mr. Grania still kept his eye on the new house. The foundation was already under construction, and by the time of the marriage, with good luck and good weather, the building would have acquired the outlines of a dwelling. He believed that his wife would have been content with the progress of things, and he finally gave his consent.

Angela had, for a time, been won by Giorgio's generosity and affectionate kindness, but there were still moments when she was swept by great waves of revulsion, moments when Giorgio's chain about her neck was a scourging reminder of a loathsome penance to be done. But always the ring upon her finger gleamed in the likeness of an accusing eye, and she began to feel ashamed of her desire for delay as a guilty evasion of her vow.

She had, too, become afraid, for the women of the community had shown her their hatred. They were jealous of her, and Rosie's quiet remarks had given them a peg on which to hang their hatred. Again and again married women had refused to speak to her, had passed her with averted eyes, or with deliberate stares and sneers. At first Angela did not believe her senses, but several repetitions forced her to realize that the community was against her. She was under the cloud of one of those mob prejudices which spring up in every community from time to time. Without understanding it, Angela felt it, and gradually she, who had been so gay, so carefree, so beautifully lacking in self-consciousness, became conscious and afraid, withdrew more and more

from the sight of her neighbours, and hid within herself.

It happened one day that, with all her problems pressing upon her, she had to get out of doors; the house was intolerable. She needed to breathe deeply, to see far, somehow to grasp God again in the sun and the wind, to feel His strength about her.

She went out and walked quickly, filled with a false awareness of sneering eyes upon her, down the road that ran out across the marshes. There was a light wind, chill but not keen, and the sunlight fell genially. Far away toward Melton the curve of one small hill lay like a jewel against the blue sky—a jewel greener and more luminous than any emerald—where early oats were growing. On both sides of her road the broken, withered stalks of last year's reeds stood stiff in the wind, but under them the shoots of new green reeds were visible. A pair of early red-wings called mournfully to each other across the marsh. Angela stood looking at the near bird as he balanced on his slender stalk, heard his call, and heard his hidden comrade answer. From these sights and sounds she gathered a mildly joyful assurance, gently moved by the incomprehensible mystery of the spring.

She went on beyond the marshes and mounted a little hillock. The low hill far away glowed more richly green in the slanting sunlight; but at last she turned her back upon it, and faced the settlement and her home. The plane of the Fist rose before her, blotched here and there with dark-brown rectangles of ploughed land. She could see the first scantlings of the new house which was to be her home standing stark against the sky.

She stood and drank deep breaths of the passing wind, feeling the spring in her body, feeling it too, subtly, in some deep chamber of her being. She was emotionally moved, at once gay and sad, touched with a nameless hope, conscious of the drabness in her life.

At last she descended the little hillock and started to walk back through the marshland. The red-wing she had seen was gone, but from some hidden place among the reeds his comrade still called mournfully, insistently. She paused to listen to that doleful note, and as she stood she saw a group of children approaching along the road, homeward-bound from the little yellow schoolhouse two miles away toward Melton. She watched them come on—eight or ten boys and girls eleven or twelve years old, attired in a heterogeneous collection of hats and garments. Soon Angela started on again, pacing slowly. She hoped that the children would pass her, for she wanted to be alone in her serenely melancholy mood. But they did not pass. As they approached they slackened their pace, so that they were, in effect, following her, and she soon became aware of their talk, became aware that they were talking about her.

"It is, too, Angela Grania!" one exclaimed.

There was silence for a moment after that, and Angela could feel their eyes passing all over her body, boring into her.

"She' goin' t' marry Giorgio Vinti," said another.

A titter passed among the children, for Giorgio was a by-word in the community, and these youngsters were expressing impressions gathered from their elders.

"My mother says she's awful lucky t' marry him. He's awful rich!" a little girl stated.

"My mother says she's a fool t' marry an ol' man," a boy countered.

"My mother says if she marries him she'll be as bad as he is," another little girl contributed.

"My mother says it's a sin t' marry anyone for money. She says Father Pasquale ought t' be ashamed to do it!"

The childish phrases stabbed into Angela's consciousness. She was indignant, but with a nervous indignation that made her afraid, not bold. She quickened her pace in an attempt to escape; but the children, sensing her intention, quickened their pace also, and followed her at a convenient distance.

"Huh! Father Pasquale can't help marryin' 'em. He's got t' marry 'em," a big boy declared.

"He has not!" a little girl contradicted positively. "He don't have t' marry people if he don't want to."

"Uh, well, he's got t' marry *them,* 'cause she promised her mother t' marry Vinti."

"She killed her mother so's she could marry him."

"I should think she'd be arrested, if she did that!"

"She did not kill her mother!"

"She did too!" declared the positive feminine voice. "Her mother was buried just a little while ago, 'cause my mother went t' the funeral!"

"Giorgio Vinti was at the funeral."

Angela had been gradually speeding her progress toward home until at last she was hurrying along in a fever of agitation and fear—fear of the sound of those pursuing voices and the things they said. The children perceived her hurry, sensed that she was a victim, and with the deliberate cruelty of youth they followed hot on the trail of their quarry.

The biggest boy called after her at last, "Hey, Missis, what's your hurry?" and the others laughed at the unmistakable response of Angela's nerves as her head moved sidewise in an involuntary twitch.

"We ain't goin' t' hurt you!" another lad cried; and a mild-eyed little girl called, "What made y' kill your mother?"

They had not yet found a slogan to suit them; but soon they found it—the phrase with the most cruel barb, the phrase that denied her every decency in this marriage with Giorgio: "She's marryin' him for his money! Shame! Shame!"

They called it after her, first one and then another, till, in a minute, they were crying it in chorus, and dancing, skipping along close behind her in their glee, like a pack of eager, baying hounds in sight of the kill. So keen was their sense of rhythm they unconsciously chanted:

"Marryin' him f'r his monee!
Shayum! Shayum!
Marryin' him f'r his monee!
Shayum! Shayum!"

It was more than Angela could bear. This was what her neighbours thought of her sacrifice! She walked as fast as she was able, the swinging chorus close behind her; and then, at last, she ran. Hatred, intense and bitter, filled her soul. If she could, she would have annihilated every child in that hunting-pack, regardless of whose whelps they might be. But she was incapable of touching them, incapable even of facing them.

At last she reached the steps of her house. With shak-

ing, terribly slow fingers she fumbled the key in the lock of the front door, while the children stood in a semi-circle below her and chanted their hunting-cry:

"Marryin' him f'r his monee!
Shayum! Shayum!"

Three or four women gathered in the road gazed at the demonstration with apparent enjoyment, while others came to windows and looked on with amused smiles. To Angela it seemed that the entire community stood jeering at her and at her betrothal.

At last the key eased in the lock; Angela sprang into the house, slammed the door behind her, and leaned against it, trembling. The rhythmic cry still sounded outside. Suddenly a large stone struck the door with a crash that made her jump and filled her with new fear. She waited breathless to see what would follow that, filled with terror before the hovering cruelty. But soon the chorus ceased in a scatter of laughter, and she heard the sounds of receding steps.

She stood and leaned against the door, too worn out to move. The house was quiet as a tomb. Out of doors all sounds seemed to have ceased with the ending of that hunting-cry. It continued to ring in her ears, and though her fear subsided, shame still moved in her sharply. She gazed into the dark emptiness of the little hall and listened to the echo of that awful children's chorus, which was the voice of their elders' accusation. She clasped her hands over her bosom to still its agitation, to save herself from collapse; then, suddenly, she threw her arms wide and cried in a voice that rang through the empty house with the anguish of a damned consciousness:

"I do love him! I do love him!"

But the declaration brought no relief. Listening to the echoes of that agonized cry, she knew in her heart that it had been a lie.

No, she did not love Giorgio. But her mother had said that love is not necessary in marriage. That didn't matter now, of course, for in any case Angela could not go back over the way she had come. There was her vow, standing in the clear image of her mother, to prevent her passage along that backward path. Certainly she could not go back; yet her present situation was intolerable. She needed support, protection; only by going forward on the path she was in could she attain them. By going swiftly she could attain them sooner.

She went into the room at the front of the house, fell on her knees by the horse-hair sofa that occupied the place where her mother's coffin had stood, and bowing her head in a final surrender to the conditions of her life, she wept.

XVIII

Thus it was finally agreed by all parties concerned that the marriage ceremony of Giorgio and Angela should be performed on the second Sunday in May, and so it was that the banns were published by Father Pasquale for the first time at mass on the last Sunday in April. There was a deep silence in the little chapel as the priest read the names from the altar—Giorgio Pedro Vinti and Angela Maria Grania—the tense silence of interest in a climactic event.

Joe attended the mass. At the sound of those names a chill sensation crept over his body, like the crawling of a swarm of insects. For a moment his head whirled; countless emotions cried in him simultaneously for expression—fear, hate, love, despair, protection for himself and for Angela. In that first emotional assault he almost gave voice to an elemental protest; but he controlled himself, clenched his fists, and held his peace. Tears stood in his eyes—tears of desperation and impotence; so far had civilization mastered him.

Then, during the mass, during the morning and after dinner, his thoughts whirled. He seemed to have waked suddenly out of a trance. His previous conclusion to let Angela's decision be his law seemed to him now foolish, impossible, mad. Had he actually been crazy? he wondered. God! What ailed him? He was losing her!

A little while and she'd be gone beyond anything he could do. He must save her—now! He must save her from Vinti—must save her for himself!

As he thought of Vinti, all Joe's faculties focused into hatred of the older man. He would have liked to go to Giorgio and maul him with his hands—beat and strangle and mutilate him. But there was in his mind a measure of cupidity that demanded his own safety. He saw that to be caught red-handed in the killing of Vinti was to lose Angela; and though he could have stood that if he could thus save her from the other man, the very thought of being caught suggested the thought of his failure. If he failed, Vinti might still have her, while he would himself be placed beyond hearing any cry for help that she might utter. Moreover, his cupidity whispered that there was a safe way—a *safe* way—if he could only find it.

Out of all his wild thoughts, imaginings and contrivings the safe way seemed to emerge at last, and on that afternoon he made his third visit to the Rosario house.

Rosie, very attractive in her new red dress, admitted him with a smile. At once, on shutting the door, she came close to him and whispered, "Don't say anythin' about Manuel goin' away. My father's home." Joe nodded his understanding, and she went at once to call her brother, who was supposed to be sleeping, but who was actually preparing his things for departure. Manuel was on the eve of leaving for New York.

Rosie returned at once and talked with Joe, but soon her brother came in from his room, and Joe stood up.

"Hello," he said. "I want t' talk with you, Manuel. Can you go out with me for a while?"

"Sure!" Manuel turned at once to get his hat.

"You don't mind me takin' your brother away?" Joe asked Rosie, with a smile.

"No," she said, smiling in response. "I guess *you* won't do him no harm."

Out of doors the two young men walked a short distance in silence, and then Joe said, "See here, Manuel, I want you t' do somethin' for me in N'York."

"All right, Joe. What is it?"

"I want you t' send me a gun."

As he spoke Joe watched Manuel narrowly, but the lad took his statement calmly enough.

"What kind of a gun?" he asked.

"A shootin'-gun—a revolver. Not too big a one, but a good one. It don't need t' be a new one, but it's got t' work right. You can get it over on the Bowery, at a pawnshop, an' you won't have t' pay much."

Manuel nodded. "How much you want t' pay, Joe?"

Joe took a bill out of his pocket. "Here," he said. "Here's ten dollars. Buy me a good gun, an' send it t' me, an' keep the change."

Manuel took the money. "All right," he said.

"But look, Manuel, I don't know how I'm goin' t' get it. I don't want anyone t' know I got it. I don't want it t' come t' me at Santos', 'cause they'd want t' know what it was, an' I don't want anyone t' know I got it."

"Well," Manuel suggested smoothly, after a moment, "that's all right. I c'n send it t' Rosie. I won't tell her what it is. I'll tell her I'm goin' t' send her a package, an' it's for you, an' she needn't open it. You c'n come over t' our house an' get it."

"She'll be suspicious, won't she?"

Manuel laughed. "She won't be suspicious o' you," he said. Then, more seriously, he added, "Rosie likes you, Joe. You let me manage it with Rosie. All you got t' do is come an' see Rosie in a few days an' get your gun." Mentally he made a note that certainly Rosie ought to pay for such service as this.

"Well . . ." Joe agreed. "Remember, Manuel, it's got t' be a gun that'll work. Don't try t' make too much money for yourself out o' that ten dollars. An' look! Do it up so's it won't look like a gun."

"Don't you worry, Joe," Manuel said. "I'll send you a gun, an' I'll fix it so's you'll get it all right. Nobody'll know anythin' about it."

Joe nodded. "Send it right away," he urged.

They walked back to the settlement together. At the Rosario house Joe bade Manuel good-bye and good luck, and returned to do the evening milking.

Joe's visit to the Rosario house was another drop of bitterness in Angela's bitter cup. She saw him knock at the door to-day, and saw Rosie admit him smiling, in her new red dress. At once Angela's heart was filled with a dull sense of loss. The figure of Joe had seemed, as he passed before her house, a thing of wonder. The youth himself, and his love, were worth more than all the world; yet she had held them in her hand and had let them go—had thrown them away. She couldn't help doing so, of course; but now Rosie Rosario had picked them up and taken them for her own.

Yet Joe's visit to the Rosario house that Sunday afternoon was not so gratifying to Rosie as Angela supposed, for she saw clearly that Joe had no interest in her. Her

yearning had become intense, had increased and grown with feeding on thoughts of Joe, and had become more famished as it thus developed, like the craving of a person addicted to the use of a drug. Yet what her yearning had to feed upon was nothing more than the most casual items of intercourse. Rosie would have considered the twenty-five dollars she had given Manuel an absolute waste but for the fact that, at the last moment before his departure, her brother had told her of the package that would come for Joe.

With that to count upon, there was still a chance for her, and with a sudden eagerness of anticipation she gave Manuel another ten dollars. Joe would come again! Manuel had refused to tell her what the package was to contain; but she was serenely careless as to that.

When the package arrived—promptly, as Manuel had promised—Rosie was, however, naturally inquisitive about its contents. It was a box the size of a shoe-box, carefully wrapped in heavy paper, and tied with the innumerable knots that a novice in doing up bundles always ties.

Rosie examined the direction carefully, computed the value of the postage stamps upon the wrapper, turned it this way and that, shook it and heard a light responsive rattle within, gazed again at the direction and at the blurred rubber-stampings of the post office. Then she laid it on the kitchen table and went about her duties. But her eyes roved back to it from time to time, and at last, when her work was finished, she took the package from the table and went to her room. There, with her scissors, she carefully loosened every intricate knot in turn, laid aside the enfolding paper, removed the cover from

the box, and exposed to view a quantity of excelsior. When she lifted this mass a thick layer came away, revealing more excelsior beneath. She bored into this, feeling with her fingers, until she touched another layer of paper wrapped about a hard object. She let her fingers wander over this object without removing it from the box—let them wander along it, for it was long—a strange shape.

Suddenly she knew what it was. Her heart stood still and the blood went cold in her veins. She was not afraid of the revolver itself; nevertheless she was overwhelmed with terror. She understood at once, intuitively, what Joe wanted a revolver for, perceiving his purpose in a flash of intelligence.

The brightness of that flash of intelligence revealed to her not only Joe's intent, but the significance of it. For a moment she hated him with the bitterness of one who realizes that he has been fooled, duped. She was angry with him and with Manuel; ashamed of Manuel's simplicity and her own. This Joe was going to kill Vinti. Well, she didn't so much mind that; but why was he going to kill him? For Angela's sake—to save Angela—because he still loved Angela! And here he was, using Manuel, using *her* for that! Rosie's face was red and her eyes were bright with anger.

But she soon became calm and smiled to herself. She replaced the excelsior in the box, wrapped and tied the package carefully, and hid it away under some garments in a bureau drawer. Then she took off her dress and let down her hair.

Her hair was long and beautiful, and she stood before her mirror for many minutes, in her underwaist and pet-

ticoat, combing it, brushing it to richer dark lustres. Her firm arms moved with wide grace, unconsciously free and strong, and as her hair grew smoother, more polished under her hands, she communed silently with her reflection in the mirror.

Apparently this man she had chosen and paid for was not to be so easily acquired; she was destined to fail here as she had failed with Vinti; she had gone to greater expense to suffer a greater loss. And there was Angela, loving the one and marrying the other of these men whom Rosie had chosen—holding them both and using neither according to his deserts. The unfairness of that was maddening. If Rosie could have taken Angela's place, she would have been thrilled with a great joy and would have thanked Heaven on her knees; then she would have selected the man she wanted, with deliberate intelligence, and would have dismissed the other to find his alternative way. She accepted Angela's inability to do likewise as the measure of her stupidity. Rosie could see no reason for allowing Angela's stupidity to mar her life, and she decided upon a course of action to prevent that casualty. She would have liked to have Giorgio and his money; but that was impossible—he had said so, and had given proof that he meant what he said. Moreover, he had now gone so far with Angela that there was no likelihood of anything upsetting their plans—unless Joe should receive his revolver.

That was not likely.

Rosie looked straight into the face before her; in those eyes a look of serene assurance settled, and the full lips relaxed into a mild ironic smile.

No, it was not likely that Joe would receive his pack-

age. For to allow Vinti to die would be equivalent to flinging Angela into Joe's arms.

Rosie rolled the dark mass of her hair into coils upon her head, pinned, touched and patted it for delicate little effects of contour and sheen, and stood looking into the mirror in a glow of satisfied appreciation. The face opposite smiled kindly now, and Rosie felt the brilliant charm of that genial presence.

"No, it ain't likely, eh, that Joe'll ever get his bundle?" Rosie asked audibly of the smiling person in the mirror.

There was an answering gesture of firm bare arms.

"It never came. Manuel'll have t' stand the blame for that!" the smiling person said.

Rosie nodded. She turned and put on her new red dress, shook and drew it into place. Then she stood and looked at the reflection seriously for a minute, but a sense of achievement swelled in her throat and she could not long be serious in the presence of that charming lady opposite. She smiled, watching the smiling response of the other, and then she laughed a little happy laugh.

"What else?" she asked serenely, raising her eyebrows.

But the lady in the mirror shook her head. "I guess you'll do," she answered.

In truth, Rosie looked as though she might "do." The red dress was the unifying touch in a picture which, for the last half-hour, had been slowly growing toward artistic perfection. Now all the brilliances were harmonized into something that very closely approximated beauty. Rosie was brilliant, for it was the spring and she was in love—she was amorous. To feel Joe's arms about her, to feel his lips voluntarily upon her face—on her lips, her eyes, her throat (she could feel them in

imagination, and her bosom swelled to that self-inflicted pain)—she would have given anything.

So it was not likely that Joe would receive his package.

It was Wednesday. In the evening, after it was dark, Joe called at the Rosario house for his package. Rosie opened the door, and before he could speak she greeted him. "Oh, hello!" she said quickly. "Come in!"

Joe went in and she placed a chair for him.

"Sit down," she said. "I'm glad t' see you. The house is awful lonesome since Manuel went. My father's never home; you know, he's workin' for Vinti."

"Don't he ever get home?" Joe asked.

"Oh, sometimes. But he ain't reg'lar. Vinti keeps 'em chasin' the tides."

"You ought t' get married, if you're lonesome," he suggested.

Rosie cast a quick glance at him, but his eyes did not express what she had hoped; so she threw out her hands in a gesture, and shrugged. "It ain't leap year," she said.

"You don't have t' wait for leap year," he remarked with conviction. "I guess the trouble is you got too many fellahs, eh?"

Rosie looked at him again, puzzled. Did he believe what he said, or had he read her desire and made haste to evade it, or was he trying to find out whether or not there was a chance for him? She couldn't tell.

"Listen!' she said. "Men are afraid o' women."

Rosie was perfectly serious, but Joe laughed out.

"I never see one I was afraid of," he said.

"No? You ain't married, though. You never see one you'd of been afraid t' marry?"

Joe didn't see what there was to be afraid of.

"Well, I've seen some I wouldn't of wanted t' marry."

"That's it!" she said. "What happened t' them?"

Joe laughed. "I do' know," he said. "Somebody married 'em, I guess."

"Yuh. They had t' wait till somebody come along that wasn't afraid."

"Sure!"

"Yuh. That's why they have leap year!"

"Well, you don't have t' wait till leap year."

Rosie looked at him again; Joe's face showed no sign of anything more than a casual interest—not in her, but in the discussion. He was "jollying," "kidding." But Rosie's agitation increased as he touched that tender spot of her desire—without perceiving that he was touching a tender spot, without caring.

"Well, I'm waitin'—for leap year or somethin'," she said.

Joe at once caught a clear impression of Rosie. He knew her type, he thought—women who become hunters instead of the hunted. Ordinarily he would have responded to the intensity of her sensed desire; but now all women were insignificant before his devotion to Angela. He at once, with a kind of distaste, withdrew from the deep waters into which the conversation had been led.

"Did Manuel send my bundle yet?" he asked.

Rosie shook her head. "I ain't heard from him," she answered. She felt that Joe did not want her, yet she could not bring herself to let him go. She was desperately eager to win him.

"You didn't get no package?" he asked.

"No," she said evenly. "He told me about it, but it ain't come yet."

She rose as she spoke and went to get a bottle of wine. She filled the tumblers and Joe remarked, "I hope he don't forget t' send it!"

"He won't," she assured him. "Maybe he had t' hunt t' find one that'll suit you."

"Huh?" Joe asked abruptly.

"He may have t' hunt for what he's buyin' you."

Joe nodded. "You know what it is?" he asked mildly. He gave her a suspicious keen glance.

"No. He wouldn't tell me. But I want t' know."

Joe shook his head. "I can't tell you. I wondered if Manuel told you."

"No. I asked him, but he wouldn't. That makes me want t' know all the more." She was perfectly frank.

"You forget it!" Joe laughed.

"I think I can guess what it is," she proposed.

"Yuh?"

"I guess it's a weddin'-gift, eh?"

"Weddin'-gift?"

"Sure!"

"Weddin'-gift!" Joe repeated.

"Sure! Vinti's goin' t' marry Angela Grania—you know!"

Joe nodded. "No," he said, "it ain't a weddin'-gift—exactly."

"I didn't know but it might be."

Joe smiled bitterly. "It *might* be, but it ain't."

"Well . . ." she said, dismissing the matter.

Joe finished his wine. Then, without warning, he rose suddenly, noisily, with anger in his face.

"Say!" he cried, "why don't that brother o' yours send me my bundle?"

There was an appearance of wildness about him. Rosie, startled and alarmed at his vehemence, jumped to her feet.

"What's the matter?" she cried. She went over to Joe and took him by the arm. "What's the matter?"

Rosie was upset, nervous, anxious. She had been on edge to lead Joe to notice her appearance, her person; she had been ready to lead him as far as he would go in that direction; but she could not be sure whether she had done well or ill in their conversation; she had deliberately lied about the package, had stumbled once in regard to her knowledge of what it was to contain, had made a mistake in mentioning the wedding-gift. His sudden burst of passion made her jump. She was confused and vaguely terrified.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "What's the matter?"

Her hands were moving convulsively on his sleeve.

Joe, suddenly quieted, stood absorbed in his thoughts. He made no reply to her repeated question. But at last he placed a brown hand over one of hers and let it rest there.

At this action a sudden peace descended upon Rosie. It seemed to her the initial gesture in an episode that she desired. Her self-confidence suddenly revived. Her whole being went still, waiting—waiting. Into her eyes there rose the quiet tears of content. Suddenly she looked up into Joe's face.

"Don't you think I'd give it t' you if it come, Joe?"

"Yes," he said, looking down at her. 'Sure you would!"

All Rosie's brilliances were very near him—her lips and eyes, her shining hair, the warm red dress—the unified splendour of her prepared handsomeness.

"I guess I scared you, didn't I?" he asked presently, still looking at her.

She shook her head. "I didn't know what the matter was."

"I'm sorry, Rosie," he stated quietly. He lifted his hand from where it rested on hers and turned slightly sidewise. He raised her chin with the tips of his fingers and, looking steadily into her expectant eyes, he kissed her on the lips.

Then, to Rosie's amazement, he turned away at once and found his cap, and without a word he went out of the house; while she stood, without a word, and let him go.

XIX

Manuel's unannounced departure from the island, the circumstance of Mr. Rosario's being so much away from home, the fact that Rosie was consequently often alone, and the repeated visits of Joe to the Rosario house were collectively of more than sufficient importance to attract and centre the attention of the community.

None of the persons likely to know had made any statement to indicate Manuel's destination, but before long everyone on the Fist knew that the lad had gone to New York, for he had sent a package to his sister.

The post office department did not deliver mail directly to the Fist. The postman drove out daily from Melton in a little rattling Ford, but his route ended at the far side of the marshes, where a group of mail boxes stood on stakes, at various angles, with names, initials, or figures daubed upon them in several colours of paint. From this point the mail was carried the mile or so to the settlement by anyone who happened to pass and who had time to deliver it from house to house as might be necessary.

On Wednesday morning it happened that Mrs. Lemos' son-in-law had driven into Melton very early for grain; on his way home he stopped, about ten o'clock, and brought on to the Fist the eight or ten pieces of mail he had found in the mail boxes, including Rosie's parcel.

Having delivered the mail, he drove into his yard and unloaded his grain, put up his wagon and his horses, and carried his newspaper into the house.

His wife asked, "Who brought the mail?"

"I did."

She was a genial woman. "Couldn't you bring anything better for your own house than a newspaper?" she asked, smiling.

"No. It's all there was. Don't worry 'cause you didn't get any letters—they ain't always good news."

"We don't get many," she said, "good or bad."

"That Rosario girl got the best o' the bunch to-day."

"Yes? P'raps she got the worst—letters ain't always good news."

"'Twasn't letters she got. No. A big box—candy, maybe."

"Candy in the mail!"

"Sure! Why not? You can get anythin' in the mail."

"Where was it from—Rosie's candy?"

"N'York."

"I wonder if it was from that Manuel that ran away."

The man nodded.

"What!" she said. "You sure?"

"His name was on it."

"So!"

By Thursday it was generally known to the people of the Fist that Rosie Rosario had received a large box of candy from Manuel, that that young man was in New York, and that she knew his address there. Yet Rosie was not aware that they knew.

She was less aware of things in general than she would

have been if Joe had not kissed her in that strange manner the night before. Rosie had never been so strangely kissed. She didn't know what it meant. Certainly it did not mean passion. No, she knew it did not mean that. He had looked at her, his eyes had held her, but they had said nothing that she could understand. As a prelude to something else, something definite, the kiss would have been entirely satisfactory; but it had led to nothing else, and as a fact, standing alone, it was an enigma. It seemed to be a tribute of some sort; but Rosie could not find in it the homage that a man pays to a woman, not the homage that she desired of Joe. Yet it was very sweet, and she clung to the bare fact of the kiss as she might have clung to her lover himself—it was, in fact, all she had of him to cling to.

Joe would come again to-night. To-night she would learn what the kiss meant. Or if not, then to-morrow night. She must be cautious; she couldn't hurry him, for he might turn back, in which case to hurry him would be to hurry him away.

One thing was clear: when he kissed her he did not believe that she had his package.

She went to the bureau drawer and felt under the clothing where the box was hidden, passed her hand over it, and snapped the string with her finger, assuring herself that it was taut. Then she closed the drawer, rose, looked at the lovely lady in the mirror once more, and went out of the room.

Joe arrived at the Rosario house that evening, determined to secure his package, for he, as well as the others, had heard of Rosie's box of candy. Anger had swept

through him at first upon hearing the gossip that apprised him of Rosie's duplicity, but he arrived in a coldly quiet mood.

When Rosie opened the door for him she was brilliant, as she had been on the previous evening, and more assured, for she had their intercourse of the night before to go on—the conversation, the kiss, and Joe's established belief in the non-arrival of the package.

As he went in he asked at once, "Well, the bundle—did it come?"

She shook her head, looking into his face, and at the same time she reached for the wine-bottle which already stood on the table. Joe wondered if, after all, it could be candy that she had received. But he knew better. In a spirit of adventure, he watched her establish her pretence.

"That Manuel!" he exclaimed. "He's a liar!"

"Poor Manuel!" she smiled. "He's havin' too good a time in N'York, I guess, t' remember."

"Huh!" Joe said. "With my ten dollars!"

"An' my dollars, too!" Rosie thought.

"Where is he? You know?"

"No," she said. "I ain't heard from him."

Rosie could go no farther in committing herself. Joe was amused, yet he was angry. For a moment he sipped his wine in silence. Then he set down his glass and rose, as if to go. Rosie also stood up. She was completely aware that she could do nothing with this man, but something in her urged her to be tenacious and try.

"You ain't goin'?" she asked.

"No?" he asked in return.

"Don't go!" she pleaded. She went to him and put

her hand on his sleeve. "Don't go so soon an' leave me all alone. My father won't be home till late." She looked at him pleadingly, and he wondered precisely what she meant. It seemed to him that she had more than once stressed her father's absence, the fact that she was alone in the house. But it didn't matter what she meant—he was not interested. He gave back her gaze steadily; then, as she had hoped, he raised his hand and clasped her wrist in his fingers. So they stood for a minute, looking into each other's eyes. Rosie was half tense, half relaxed, ready to yield to the slightest pressure expressing his desire—ready to hold her lips for his kiss, or to sink into whatever embrace he might offer her.

His clasp slowly tightened on her wrist, the look in his eyes slowly changed, then he said quietly, "Look here, Rosie, when're you goin' t' give me that bundle?"

As he spoke she became aware that he understood her thoroughly, knew her hopes and her deception, and was brushing them all aside to get at the object of his own desire; he was using her to prosecute his scheme for saving Angela. Her anger flamed, she uttered an oath, and struggled to free herself from his grasp; but he held her firmly, still looking down at her, till at last she gave up, perceiving the uselessness of fighting against his knowledge and his strength.

"When?" he repeated.

"Joe!" she cried. "Joe! You hurt!"

"When?"

He did not relax his grip.

Rosie hung her head at last, and tears flowed down her cheeks. She could not speak for bitterness—the bitterness of having him find her out like this, of having him

toss her away like this—the bitterness of knowing that he could make her suffer and not care. She could not speak through those tears of pain, but she nodded her head in acquiescence to the demand of his questioning "When?"

He let her go then and returned to his chair, and Rosie went out of the room, sobbing in abandonment.

As he sat alone and awaited her return he despised her, heaped upon her the supercilious cold contempt with which a man of strong passions treats those inviting women who make no appeal to his desire.

As she looked at the package, alone in her own room, life seemed desperate to Rosie—utterly useless. For an instant she realized that she held in her hand the means of ending all the weary emptiness of the present and the future. But she was in love with Joe. His brutality and his disdain—his utter withdrawal—made her love the more intense; she could not bring herself to commit the act that would definitely cut her off from him for ever. Her mind turned in a kind of humbleness—the abasement of the hopeless—to the power outside herself —not God—she did not know what—and she uttered a cry, asking for a sign of hope, pleading for some assurance to make life worth while. But no answer came, and at last, in misery, she dried her eyes, and went, calm and cold, into the kitchen. She placed the package on the table, and Joe sat looking at it with a faint smile. "It come at last, eh, Rosie?" he said, nodding.

"I opened it," she said quietly.

Joe sprang out of his chair. "You what?" he cried.

"I opened it," she said. "I know what it is."

"We better look at it, then," he said with a sneer, and

she threw him a swift glance of reproach for that. He trusted her even less than he might have.

Joe took a knife from his pocket and cut the string, tossed the paper covers aside, and brought forth the revolver and a small box of ammunition. Then he looked to see if the chambers were empty and, finding them so, he snapped the barrel round its six-pointed circle. Satisfied with his inspection, he slipped the weapon into one pocket of his coat, and the ammunition into another, and turned to Rosie.

"Now," he asked with a smile, "you want t' talk about marryin'?"

"No," she said, "but I want t' tell you somethin' else. I know what you got that for."

"Yes?" he asked, apparently amused.

She nodded, and he sat looking at her. She felt his scrutiny dully; she could have borne it indefinitely. But at last she asked, without looking at him, "What d'you suppose I kep' it for, Joe?"

"Hah!" he laughed. "You know what I got it for; you don't like me t' hurt your friend Vinti, eh?"

"Hurt my friend Vinti?"

Joe nodded with animation. But Rosie tossed her head, with a smirk that was a wry smile. He didn't understand! Ah, they were stupid—men—they never understood her!

"No," she said, "I don't mind about Vinti. But if you kill him . . ."

"Well?" he asked.

"They'll get you."

"Get me!"

"If you kill him, they'll get you," she repeated in an

even, dull voice. She raised tired eyes to his face, and as she did so, a faded afterglow of desire shone in them for a moment.

"Ah, Rosie!" Joe chaffed. "You mean . . . ?" He raised his eyebrows, whimsically inviting her confidence.

She began to cry quietly again, and Joe sat looking at her with a faint pity. He understood then, for the first time—felt it as well as knew it—that she loved him with a high intent and some measure of intensity; he saw that she was devoted to him, had tried to make him see her love; had schemed to save him for her love. Yet the thing she had hoped for, schemed for, and desired was impossible. He was himself in love, but not with Rosie. She was like a child crying for the moon, as he was himself, except for the difference of the gun in his pocket. He pitied her—but that was all he could do.

At last he stood up. "I'm sorry, Rosie, but it can't be done," he said. "But listen: don't worry about me."

He moved across the room to get his hat, and she got up from her chair. The moment of her last chance with him had arrived.

"Listen, Joe!" she said. "Don't you use that gun."

"What d'you think I got it for?" he asked, smiling.

"I'm goin' t' tell," she answered, without emotion.

He walked over and stood before her. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Everything you do an' everything you say is crazy!"

"I'm goin' t' tell 'em you got it," she repeated.

"Huh!" he sneered. "Run an' tell him. Tell him quick. Run an' tell your friend Vinti t' look out! An' after that, look out yourself."

"I'll tell everyone you've got that gun."

"Say!" he answered. "I'll tell you somethin'! You're the on'y woman I ever see that I'd be afraid t' marry. You're a liar an' a crook! You're rotten!"

He swept out of the house, angry and determined, and took his way around by Vinti's shack; but the place was deserted. Out on the waters, like stars, he could see the lanterns of Vinti's crew blinking in the vicinity of the fish-pound.

XX

After Joe's departure Rosie sat dejected, gazing before her with unseeing eyes. She was thinking of Joe, of what might have been, and of the blank emptiness that remained instead. Her mind hovered about her dead hopes and longings, and finally clung, as a drowning man clings to any tangible thing, to the mysterious kiss—the one fact of substance in all that floating mass of wrecked visions. She did not yet know what the kiss had meant. It had been a tribute, perhaps it had been a promise, but if so, it was a lie and would never be fulfilled. Perhaps it had meant pity. Pity! That was the most bitter thing he could have given her. She did not understand Joe; she did not understand herself. He pitied her, and yet she loved him.

Her mind roused at last to the realities of the present —Joe was gone, with the revolver, leaving behind him the threat of his determination. She rose to her feet, was almost dragged out of the house by her desire to follow him, to plead with him, to dissuade him; but she knew it to be useless. Then the realization of his danger again came flooding over her, and she became nervous with terror at the threat of that impending catastrophe.

In the midst of her agitation a thought came to her very gently, very quietly—came to her casually in the midst of her fears. It pulled her up short. Her brain said, simply, "Angela."

Angela? Go to Angela, the stupid? The stupid! The stupid who, with all her stupidity, held the love of one of these men and the marriage fealty of the other—perhaps Angela could do something to save them both—for herself! Deep fires of hatred flamed up in Rosie at the thought of that other woman. Both of the men belonged to her. Why should she, Rosie, try to save either of them? No! She would sit here at home and let those others fight out their affair by themselves. It was nothing to her.

No, it was nothing to her; yet as she told herself so, she was trying to think through her hatred, trying to think through a terror of apprehension. In her deepest mind she knew that she must go—must save Joe at any cost.

At last she laughed wearily at herself, and went to put on her hat and jacket. Her fingers hurried and fumbled; but at last she was ready. Then she went out and hurried to the house of the Granias.

Everything in the Grania house was quiet; Angela was alone. She stood, apprehensive at this late and unexpected visit, and motioned Rosie into a chair. "What is it?" she wanted to cry out—her eyes cried it; but she held her tongue and smothered her suspense, waiting for her guest to speak.

That was not an easy thing for Rosie to do. It had not been easy for her to come. That had seemed to be the last rally of her energy, the last testimonial of her love—the fling of the torch for Angela to catch and carry on, for Joe's sake, while she herself should be left behind. Having arrived at the house, Rosie feared that she would have to fling the torch again and again before Angela's

stupidity would grasp it. And, actually, it was not only that—not only abandoning everything to this other woman and finding an oblivious peace—for there was something that she would still like to save, if possible—a tattered remnant of illusion, a patch of self-deception, something that could not be stated, to clothe, to decorate, even, some day perhaps, to sublimate the stark imbecility of that precious, senseless kiss. She considered how to fling the torch, but she considered also how to save her illusion. She must maintain her dignity before this girl whom she hated and despised.

"Listen, Angela," she began at last. "You know Manuel's gone away."

Angela nodded, but Rosie paid no heed.

"Well, when he went," she continued, "that young fellah Joe, over to Santos', wanted him t' get him somethin' in N'York. But he didn't want anyone t' know he had it, so Manuel sent it t' me."

She did pause for an instant then, to see how Angela took that, and she noted with a gleam of satisfaction that she took it with amazement.

"What d'you suppose he had it sent t' me for?" she went on, with the air of a school-teacher.

"What was it?" Angela asked in return, leaping all preliminaries, to Rosie's astonishment.

"A revolver."

Angela, shocked, gazed at her visitor.

"How d'you know what it was?" she asked.

"I opened the bundle t' see."

"Ah! Then you didn't give it to him!"

"Yes, I did."

"You did! Oh, Rosie, what did you do that for?"

"He made me. But now . . . "

"When?" Angela interrupted.

"Half an hour ago."

There flashed into Angela's mind—complete, detailed, horrible, and swiftly changing—pictures of Joe dead, mutilated, destroyed. She saw him perform the awful, shattering act; she saw him performing it then—that instant; fancied she could hear the echoing terror of the shot, felt its sharp concussion on her heart.

"Joe!" she gasped. "Joe! Don't!" Then she cried at Rosie, "Where is he?"

Rosie shrugged. "I do' know," she answered, gone suddenly stupid. "Home, I guess."

Angela's rising excitement made a demand on Rosie's emotions which they were too spent to meet. She was very tired—exhausted. She continued to sit there, motionless, as Angela rushed out of the house.

"She's not such a fool!" Rosie thought vaguely. "Never even thought o' poor Vinti." She laughed a dry little laugh. Well, she'd go home. She was done with them all.

She rose after a while and went out of the house. She would have liked to follow Angela, but she was too tired. What did it matter, anyway, what Angela might do? What did anything matter?

Angela, filled with terror, ran swiftly under the stars, and as she went she prayed for help in what she had to do, prayed that Joe's act might still be delayed. As she prayed she turned her eyes to heaven, and there before her, blotting out the stars, rose the plane of the Fist like the shadow of a perpetual menace. Its immobility,

its strength, its placid indifference filled her with an increased sense of terror. She alone could save Joe; nothing in heaven or on earth would help her.

But as she hurried across the narrows below the Fist, she perceived a point of light in one of the upper windows of the Santos house. Her heart leaped to it. It seemed somehow reassuring, and she started to run again toward its promise.

Then, suddenly, as she ran, the light went out; the oblong brightness of that window was blotted into the surrounding gloom. She was alone again in a wide, hovering terror. The obliteration of that friendly light was like a warning of defeat, a signal of some deep finality. Terror surged about her, filled all space, became the substance of the sea and sky, the earth, the fluid air. Every stone she stumbled on seemed placed by some malign power; every wind that hummed in her ears was like the mocking murmur of an opposed intelligence; every surging of the sea was like the conscious measuring of an hour of doom. Through it all she hurried; her limbs moved automatically. She was mercilessly beset, but she never stopped; and at last she came to the house of old man Santos.

The house stood very dark and still—waiting, secretive, as if it held temporarily a secret which, when divulged, would go shrieking through the night and fill the surrounding terror with triumphant echoes.

Angela had come to save Joe. Now her courage faltered at facing that tremendous issue—that tremendous possibility—for the house told her she had come too late. Its windows showed like faces, forbidding her to intrude upon a fact accomplished—sending her away—for

what had she to do with him now? She was too late!

But she faced this menace also. Joe was hers! Dead or alive, he was hers!

"No! No! Oh, my God!" she whispered, denying her fears; and she banged on the door.

She heard a rumble within, but there was no answer; the house was not yet ready to divulge its secret.

She banged again, madly, without waiting; but the only answer was the silence of a great delay.

Holy Mother! Were they all dead? She banged again, viciously. "Hey!" she cried. "Hey! Hey! Hey!" Then, with a little whimper, she abandoned her rationality; she banged without ceasing. She was ready to let her humanity go—ready to become a beast, a savage, a part of the surrounding terror. But as she pounded she heard a voice at last.

"Hi! Wait!" cried Mr. Santos. "Who's there?"

"Oh, hurry!" she begged, banging again on the panels.

The old man opened the door. "'Twasn't locked," he said, peering to see what ailed this woman who pounded and shrieked like mad. He held in his hand a flashlight, and he tried to focus its projected circle of brightness into her face; but she rushed past him before he could do so—rushed into the kitchen and would have rushed through the house, but she did not know which was the right turn to take. So she paused, and at last old man Santos got his little circle of light fixed upon her.

"Ah!" he exclaimed at sight of her. "You want Joe?"

He thought her coming meant that she had abandoned Vinti; but her appearance frightened him.

"Sit down, Angela," he said quietly, revealing, with his light, a chair out of the darkness.

"Where is he—Joe?" she asked, paying no heed.

"Sit down," he said firmly. He placed his arm about her trembling body and led her to the seat, and she sank into it dazedly.

"Joe?" she asked.

"You want Joe? I'll fetch him," the old man said.

Mrs. Santos came into the kitchen and, seeing Angela, she hurried forward and enveloped the girl in an ample embrace. "What? What?" the old woman cried.

"Light the lamp," Santos ordered, "an' give Angela some wine. I'll get Joe."

When he had gone Angela held her breath, tensely waiting for the old man's cry when he should find Joe dead. But there was no cry. Instead, she heard voices murmuring. Soon Santos returned, followed by Joe, and at sight of the young man Angela leaped from her chair, putting her wine-glass into the hand of Mrs. Santos, who stood beside her.

"Oh, Joe!" she cried. "Joe, where is it?"

Her eyes went over him, searching, searching. To her it was as if he had come back from the dead, and she was seeking to find the mark of the wound that had killed him.

He did not understand her cry. He came close and tried to touch her, but she evaded him and, wringing her hands, she cried wildly, "Oh, where is it? For God's sake, can't you tell me?"

He knew then that she meant the revolver, and he thought he understood her motive in seeking it.

"I've got it," he said. "I've got it safe."

She looked at him with eyes grown suddenly listless. Her terror was over; she had heard him speak. She

seemed to wilt, to shrink before their eyes. Joe felt a great pity for her, a great pity for himself, that he could not comfort them both by taking her in his arms. But it was not for that that she had come. No, she had come to save Vinti.

"Give it t' me, Joe?" she begged.

"No," he said. "I'll keep it. You won't need it."

"Need it!" she cried. "Oh, you won't use it?"

He laughed, but it sounded bitter. It hurt his pride and his love that she should come begging like this for the other man's protection.

"You won't use it—promise me, Joe?" she pleaded. "Give it t' me?"

"Ha!" he said. "For a weddin'-present, maybe."

He recalled Rosie's ironic suggestion. For a moment then it occurred to him, as it had occurred to Rosie, that he might use this weapon concerning which there was so much controversy, for his own peace instead of for Vinti's harm. He need not suffer such things as this any more. But he put the thought away at once. He was unhappy, and the world promised him nothing; but there were a thousand possibilities—even possibilities involving Angela—and his youth cried out instinctively that life was better than death.

He was roused from his reverie, for suddenly Angela sank to the floor, and kneeling before him, she cried out, "Joe! Don't do it! Give it to me, Joe! Oh, my God! I can't have two deaths on my soul!" She lowered her face into her hands and wept; she was convulsed with the thought of her everlasting damnation.

Joe and the old man stooped quickly and lifted her to

her chair. Mrs. Santos leaned over and soothed her.

"What is it, for God's sake?" the old woman cried, grown angry at Joe's apparent brutality. "Can't you do what she wants?"

Joe looked at Mrs. Santos, looked at Angela, still sobbing desolately. Then he turned to old man Santos beside him and exclaimed, "God! Women! What're they for?" He was half angry, half sad, completely overcome. Then, without giving the old man time to answer, he said, "Get your boots on, an' we'll take her home."

Later the three of them walked back in silence to Angela's house. The lamp was still burning in the empty kitchen. As she stood within the door of the lighted room, while they stood just outside, she looked at Joe with beseeching eyes. "Joe," she begged softly, "promise me you won't?"

"Look," he said. "It's all right. I didn't know how you felt. But I know now, an' you don't need t' worry; I won't hurt Vinti—I promise."

He turned away as he spoke, and before she recovered from the shock of his statement he and the old man were gone. Vinti! The possibility of Joe's attacking Vinti entered into her head then for the first time. For a moment she stood appalled at the idea, appalled at what she had done. She realized that she had closed the door against her own last chance for escape; and now, as the clang of that irrevocable closing rang in her ears, her mind held a fleeting, remembered vision of the loveliness that lay beyond that door—loveliness now for ever unattainable. And Joe! She saw that he had misunderstood her solicitude, did not know that it was he whom

she had tried to save. The bitterness of that! She sat staring stupidly before her; things had become too hopeless for tears.

She presently had for solace, however, the dim thought that in spite of his misunderstanding, she had saved Joe. She perceived that whatever he might have done with the revolver would probably have been fatal to his own safety. She clutched at the thought that she had saved him; he did not understand, but she had saved him nevertheless. Actually, he did not need to know. And yet, she wished that he had not misunderstood. . . .

Joe and old man Santos returned quietly in the dark. As they crossed the narrows the old man put his arm about the young fellow's shoulder, and the gesture was like the kindest word he could have said. It broke Joe's silence.

"I better tell you about this," he proposed, and the old man nodded in the dark.

"Well, I bought a gun," he began, "an' I was goin' after Vinti."

Santos' fingers tightened on the lad's shoulder.

"Oh, I could 'a' done it an' never been caught. Vinti's big enough t' hit, an' the nights are dark. But y' can't do anythin' with women. That Rosie opened the box an' found out what was in it."

"Rosie?"

"Yes. Her brother sent me the gun from N'York, an' I was t' go to their house an' get it. Y' see, I didn't want anyone t' know I had it, so I didn't want it t' come t' me. Well, Manuel sent it t' her, an' she opened the box an'

found out, an' there was the end of it. She must 'a' told Angela, an' then *she* come t' beg for his life."

They had crossed the narrows, and now Santos, guiding with a pressure of his hand on Joe's shoulder, urged the lad toward home; but Joe resisted. "No, not yet," he said. "I got t' talk."

He led the steep way up the face of the cliff, and the old man went along with him in silence.

"I'd of done anythin' t' save Angela," Joe began again. "I didn't know she cared so much about Vinti. Well, this is the end for me. I never wanted t' get married till I met Angel; now I don't want to any more." He laughed sneeringly at his own folly. "I used t' play with the girls," he went on, "but I never done 'em any harm; now they give me hell! Angel turns me down, an' Rosie goes an' tells my only secret. I can't see what makes 'em all so wild about that fat guy Vinti."

The old man said nothing and they mounted on to the apex of the curving rim. They stood there, side by side, a moment, and then Joe began to talk again.

"Look," he said. "Here's the gun." He took the revolver from his pocket, and the starlight shone in a blue line along its barrel as Santos gazed at it. "It's all loaded an' ready for business," Joe said, "but it'll never do any business. It's like me—turned down, no good, thrown away."

As he finished speaking he made a wide, overhand, swinging gesture with his arm, and Santos saw a dull gleam shoot out into space. After an instant that gleam was no longer visible, and in a moment, with a light splash, the gun signalled its descent into the sea.

Joe and Santos stood there, seemed to listen, seemed to wait for some response, as if Joe's act had been in propitiation of old gods—seemed to be waiting for a sign that the sacrifice offered was good and acceptable. But there was no sign, no response—only the shiver of stars in the silent void of the sky, and the echoing passionless turmoil of quiet seas.

At last Santos stirred and led the way down to the long outcropping ledges of the cliff's substance. Here he sat down, and Joe sat beside him. For a while neither of them spoke, but at last old man Santos remarked, "You're young, Joe."

There was another silence. Then Santos went on, "Women, Joe—I do' know! They're made f'r us, but we're made f'r them, too. It's nature an' it's God. Men destroy women an' women destroy men, but together they create life. It's a strange thing! They're always fightin'. Even when they're in love they're fightin'—like fire an' water—an' yet they make life. An' life, Joe, what is it, eh? I do' know! Men fight women an' women fight men. Then we die, an' it don't make no difference. What's it all for?—who knows?

"You never want' t' marry till you met Angela. Well, you think there's on'y one woman f'r a man? Father Pasquale, he says yes. I do' know! I see men marry more than once. Women, too, they don't stay widahs. How's that? Ah, well, you say—it ain't the marryin' that counts, it's the love. . . . Joe, I got t' tell you this: love ain't all. Men get over love, like a sickness. When they get that sickness they don't want t' get well. But they got t' get well. Sure! You get well an' you get sick again—an' again. One time when you get sick you

maybe marry; an' maybe you get well after that—but you mustn't never get sick again, eh? No. You believe that, then! So you don't fight the women no more—no, on'y jus' the one woman; an' she fights back at you—always, till you die. That fight—it's your life an' her life.

"Yes, that's life, Joe—fightin'. You got t' do it. It's like your hand, Joe, or your heart—it's in you, an' you can't help it. Jus' now you're sick—sick with the love like I say—sick with the fightin'. Yes, sick with the love—you see?"

"No," Joe said quietly, "I ain't sick. I may go on fightin' the women like you say, but I ain't sick any more now, an' I won't be sick again—ever. I'm cured o' lovin' 'em. I'm cured for always."

"So!" Mr. Santos exclaimed. He shook his head and smiled faintly in the darkness. "Come!" he said, rising. "Let us go down. We plant the corn down there to-morrah, Joe."

Joe rose, and they descended the plane of the Fist together.

XXI

TEN days later, Angela was, without impediment, married to Giorgio Vinti in the little chapel. Only the persons directly concerned were present—Father Pasquale, Giorgio and Angela, Mr. Grania, and the witnesses.

On the morning of her wedding-day Angela was filled with a serene peacefulness. She had been gradually putting all doubts and questionings behind her; she had reached a point from which she could see the past as finished and the future as waiting, single and inevitable, for her coming. She had at last turned her face resolutely toward the scene of her duty and had gone forward, braced by conviction, to fulfil her vow. There was something of the spirit of a martyr in her resolution, and she felt, too, increasingly, the hovering approval of her mother—the satisfied forgiveness of the dead woman's spirit.

Angela faced the dawn of a new day. But the old day was not quite dead, and as she glanced backward from her intermediate situation, she beheld it still there, still visible in a growing dimness. In that dim past even Joe had faded. He moved, to her vision, as upon a height—as upon the height of the Fist itself—outlined bleak and dark against a waning sky. She could not see his features; but from the motion of that silhouette with bowed head, she knew that he did not laugh; he went

alone, sombre, sad, pathetic. The splendid image of him which she had held in her heart had altered and, in altering, it had become less shining, less clear—blurred and dimmed by the tears of her renunciation. She saw him now only as that silhouette against the sky of the past—an effigy, a caricature—Joe, her joyful lover, with bowed head.

The future, like the past, was dim to her vision, but it was dim in the dusk of a coming brightness. It was, in fact, a wide new space, a great new land, where the light was growing. Without detailed thought she imagined that life in the future would be richer, better than any she had ever known—enlarged and rounded with the substance of new importances to match its brightness and its space; and she was lifted, spiritually and physically, in a mild eagerness to meet the challenge and the promise which it held.

The note of largeness, of importance, was struck by Giorgio. His was the only figure emerging with any clearness, as yet, in that growing light. He emerged, in fact, as a large, jovial, embodied kindness, and Angela had come to see him in a rational relationship. Never since the day of her wild cry (that was a lie) in the dark little hall of the empty house, had she pretended to love him; but her terror of him had given place to a quiet acceptance, while there had grown up in her consciousness a sense of gratitude, loyalty, even liking for the bluff old man. It was the result, perhaps, of the diffusion of her interest in him over the interests of his life; for, while it frequently occurred to Angela's mind that Giorgio had been a sensualist, he seemed to have come to her recovered, reformed, carrying no visible

sign or scar of his hectic past; and as he talked of plans for the new house, his business, their marriage, he did so with a force and enthusiasm that testified to his complete interest in the future. If these new visions were to be built upon the past—as they unavoidably were—Giorgio, in so building, seemed to have buried deep all memory of those former times, thereby obliterating them as facts, since only in memory can the past survive.

Actually as well as seemingly, Giorgio had for the time forgotten the old days in the contemplation of the future. He was disillusioned. When he had looked back upon the past, not so long ago, it had seemed in many phases to have been a silly business. He realized that heretofore he had not even undertaken a man's complete job. Now he was ready to do so; he turned to the future with all his energy, turned his back upon the past without regret.

Angela's wedding-day was beautiful with all that nature at mid-May could furnish. The sun shone in a lightly clouded sky and the winds had become kind under its large beneficence. The sea was blue and bright. The island stretched away softly green on every hand. It was a day for laughter, for tenderness, for love.

After the simple marriage ceremony, Giorgio and Angela crossed to the mainland with Father Pasquale in the priest's small boat and, having landed, they bade him a smiling good-bye. With Giorgio the little priest was calmly congratulatory; with Angela he was frankly tender. He took and held her hand as he talked with her apart.

"Remember, Angela, my child," he said, "that you

have undertaken the greatest responsibility in life—not only in material, but in spiritual things. In becoming a wife, you become one of God's chosen creatures—chosen to do His mysterious work; and in becoming a mother, you will be approaching very near to God Himself, for you will, by His grace, be creating life and bringing immortal souls to the test of life. In the meantime, my child, remember your duty as a Catholic. Your husband is not a good Catholic. We must pray and strive to bring him within the fold of the church, that he may recognize and acknowledge his God. Fundamentally Giorgio is a good man, but he doesn't know. You must enlighten his ignorance. Pray to the Blessed Virgin to help you in this. Now good-bye; and may God be with you in your new life."

It was in the spirit of this high and beautiful, this holy picture, that Angela began her honeymoon with Giorgio. They went to Boston in the train. From there they went to New York in a great steamer, and spent two days viewing the immensities and grandeurs of the metropolis.

During those few days and nights, Giorgio was always humorously kind, and he respected, with unimagined restraint, his young wife's hesitant modesty. She was not, he told himself, like other women he had known, and his relation to her was not as his relations to them had been. He knew that he could not, and he did not, expect Angela to leap at once into an approximation of his own years and his own knowledge—he did not want her to do so. On the contrary, he was willing to go a long way back to meet her on the road of experience; and in a temporary tender mood he even wished, for her sake and, yes, surely

for his own, that he might go farther—that he might go so far back on that road that they could, somehow, start out together from the same point of virtue, impelled by the same mysterious, fearful eagerness.

That, of course, could not be; but under the influence of his mood he grew perceptibly more kind. He was always jolly, and as they travelled in Broadway, Fifth Avenue, or Forty-second Street (for he avoided old haunts that he knew in another section of the town), he was amusedly conscious of the unmistakable stares that many individuals in the moving mass of people treated him to. It tickled his egotism that even in New York he should be conspicuous. He knew, of course, that the presence of Angela, dressed in clothes that were patently the garments of a bride, was one of the reasons for those stares, and he at once perceived her to be of that most gratifying type of acquisition—a bulwark to one's pride.

In this mood of satisfaction and with the assurance that he had in his pocket sufficient money for any extravagance that the city might suggest his attempting, he saw no reason why he should not attempt its brightest, its most "classy" restaurant and *revue*. He chuckled to himself complacently and, with a feeling of exhilaration at adventuring so far out of his orbit, he made the attempt. What he landed at was, with his usual good luck, precisely what he had aimed at—a "classy" up-town cabaret, one of New York's most tawdry, though expensive, blatancies—and because he and Angela arrived early, they secured a table at once. It was not until they were seated opposite each other over the small white square of the table-top that Angela dared to raise her

eyes and investigate the dim spaces surrounding that small white island.

Having done so, she was not very clear about where she was. She had a confused sense of having been mysteriously transported out of New York; yet she did not know where she had been transported to. She was of a sufficient naïveté to accept the elaborate decoration almost at its face value—to give herself up to its illusion—and she was extraordinarily charmed to find herself in this white marble temple whose columns rose, on the one side, against a far-reaching perspective of flowered lawns and deep blue water, and, on the other, against a wooded hill from which other marble temples looked seaward over her head. Upon the balustrade of the temple in which she sat, numbers of iridescent peacocks poised and preened, and all about her, gaudy parrots hung, erect and at angles of inversion. At the end of the temple was a shrine—a guarded space—screened by a pale green curtain on which other parrots and peacocks poised and preened. It was as if these birds were the symbols of the temple's dedication to pride and glamour and a raucous inconsequence.

As she and Giorgio ate their expensive dishes, the temple gradually became filled with devotees, lights became more bright, and at last the drapery was drawn away before that guarded space, and the coloured jazz-orchestra was, amid a light round of applause, presented to view, with all its gleaming smiles.

The orchestra at once went to work, playing capably and with countless gyrations a nervous, noisy, rhythmic fox-trot. Promptly a young man rose from a table where

he had been eating and, with a young lady in his arms, glided out upon the floor, under the critical eyes of the assembled audience. Soon other couples moved swayingly out upon the floor. For Angela the effect was confusing, for while she tried to follow the perfect, incomprehensible figures which the original pair seemed to be weaving, she found it impossible as the floor became more and more crowded, and she had at last simply to gaze, fascinated, at all those people joyfully weaving, each couple its own different pattern, within the great pattern that wove and wove about the hall.

It was in this exciting kaleidoscope of dancers that Angela saw Manuel Rosario—in a great barbaric blare of the music that her eyes caught him. She was not at first sure that it was Manuel, for the young man who suggested him was at the far side of the dancing-space, moving with an easy smoothness in the revolving stream of figures. As he moved he talked quietly and listened to the low laughter of the small, bright blonde girl who was dancing with him.

They came on—the young man and his partner—moving in the gaudy rhythm of the music, and Angela was forthwith able to see them more clearly. The young man did not turn his head as he moved, but his eyes swept quietly, slowly, over the succeeding arcs of vision that opened to him as he stepped along in the dance. Angela was soon sure that the young man was Manuel, and she was promptly aware that when his roving look came to the place where she sat it paused, stopped and lingered. The animation in his face gave place to a surprised stare, and he turned his head then, quickly, to see who her partner at the table was. Perceiving Giorgio,

urbane and smiling, his eyes turned back to Angela with a kind of eagerness, and the blood mounted visibly under the smooth surface of his calm till his whole face glowed beneath the even halves of his shining hair.

He stopped in his swing about the oblong dancing-space, and murmuring to his gay blonde partner, he led her forward to the table where his friends sat. As she watched them come on, Angela was amazed at the other girl's costume—so scant, so suggesting, so revealing. It didn't seem to this newly-married woman that the girl could have on anything whatever besides her visible garments—the daintiest black silk slippers, black silk stockings, and the plainest, shortest, narrowest of all possible black silk dresses. She seemed to be costumed with an intense economy. The blonde creature was herself charming, very young and very small. Her delicately, deliberately unconcerned manner gave the impression that she was unconscious of how little she was wearing, and it gave too, indefinably, the impression that she would not have minded wearing even less.

As she and Manuel came forward to the table, Giorgio saw them, glimpsed Manuel and recognized him, and then his eyes settled in a long look upon the little blonde girl. He watched every movement of her body, the deliberate swing of her slim legs, the shine of her bright hair, and the calm regard of her large pale eyes.

"Ha!" he laughed, shortly, happily, as they came up; and he rose with a genial eagerness. Giorgio was, in fact, delighted. He had been growing a little weary of his surroundings, for he had begun to feel that in this temple of pleasure he was merely a tolerated onlooker; and he did not want to be a tolerated onlooker. He wanted to

be in the midst of everything, but he didn't know how to get in—yet there had been certain eyes which, in passing, had looked into his own not unkindly. The coming of Manuel and the little girl—especially the coming of the little girl—was as the coming of messengers from that surrounding pleasure.

A waiter was summoned, he brought two chairs, and Manuel and his partner sat down at the table.

"What'll you have?" Giorgio asked in a large manner, looking at the girl.

"Let me order," Manuel suggested. "Let me order somethin' for all of us."

"Go ahead!" Giorgio laughed. "Go ahead! You order, an' I'll pay."

Manuel turned and spoke quietly to the waiter, and the waiter disappeared, returning after a while with four small coffee-cups filled with a liquid that gave off neither the odour nor the steam of coffee.

"See how you like that!" Manuel said; and at his suggestion they lifted the cups and drank the contents in their respective manners.

Giorgio was delighted. He and Manuel exchanged an appreciative grin, and the old man asked, suddenly dropping his voice to a whisper, "Can we get any more?"

Manuel laughed. "All you want t' pay for," he said. "Hey! Waiter!"

The music began and the girl looked at Manuel with a question in her eyes.

"Want t' dance?" he asked.

"Sure!" she said.

"'Scuse us!" Manuel exclaimed, rising. They were about to start away, but Giorgio laid his hand on the

girl's slim bare arm. "Bring him back here," he commanded.

She looked at Giorgio with clear eyes and smiled very faintly. Then she gave a little nod and threaded her way after Manuel to the dancing-space, and they swung off into the already flowing stream.

"Giorgio, what's that in the cups?" Angela asked.

"Cocktails. Don't you like it?"

"It's all right," she said, "but it's strong."

He laughed mildly. A new animation had come to him—not alone from the cocktail, but from the fact of his changed relation to all the pervading gaiety. He felt that he was now a part of it. It had come over and held out its hand to him, had even admitted him to one of the secrets of its joy.

"Drink it," he said; "it's good for you."

The waiter brought them four other small cups, and Giorgio paid the eight dollars demanded. He was surprised at the price, but he admitted to himself that he was getting his money's worth; he reminded himself that a wedding-trip happened only once, perhaps, in a lifetime, and he tipped the efficient waiter generously.

Soon the others returned. The waiter whispered to Manuel, and Manuel looked at Giorgio. "Sure!" Giorgio called out eagerly. "Why not? They don't last long!"

Four more cups were promptly placed.

Most of the lights went out.

Then, down across the dancing-place a group of girls came swaying, shining white and silver, with faces like flowers, under floods of light from some hidden source, swathed in pale diaphanous draperies that were not costumes but part of a decorative scheme. Angela gasped

at the exposed slim loveliness of the girls, beside whom the little blonde seemed decorously clothed. Entirely ignorant of the arts of costume and make-up, Angela was more shocked than she needed to be. A part of her emotional protest at the gorgeous spectacle was a kind of sympathy for the dancing-maids—which they would have vigorously resented. They were, as a matter of fact, conscious of their slim loveliness, and they wanted, not sympathy, but applause.

Manuel paid little attention to the cabaret. Neither the music nor the dancing-girls seemed to interest him. He moved his chair over beside Angela's and began to talk, in a subdued voice, about her marriage, what she had seen in New York, about his family, about the island, about Joe; and as Angela talked with him she looked at him. He was greatly changed; he seemed somehow to be smoothed, slicked, polished; his clothes fitted him, made him appear slim and elegant. She felt that in leaving the island he had done a right thing, that he had succeeded, though she could not have said what his success consisted of or amounted to. He seemed, somehow, to belong in this gay, rich, splendid atmosphere, and he seemed more American than Portuguese. She wondered fleetingly how he managed to afford all that he seemed to be affording; that he seemed able to afford so much was a part of the American impression. He talked constantly, but he did not talk about himself.

In the meantime Giorgio was taking an interest in the little blonde partner. She was amiable enough in her reserved way, but Giorgio, to his own surprise, was piqued, irritated at her reserve. He wanted her to respond to the efforts he was making to draw her out; he

felt an intense desire to make her respond. He could not conceive of her laughing heartily at anything whatever, and he was aware of a desire to be cruel to her, to hurt her, to make her cry out—make her respond—to that. He wanted to take her in his arms, to feel the slimness of that light body in the grasp of his strength. He wanted to crush her, to hurt her—to comfort her.

Manuel watched them, listened to them covertly as he talked with Angela, and he heard Giorgio ask the girl:

"What d'you do f'r a livin'?"

"I'm a manicurist," she replied, looking calmly into his face. From the manner in which she said it, Giorgio gathered that it was something important, and he was almost ashamed to exhibit his ignorance of what she meant.

"Oh! Well, ah—what's that?" he finally asked.

"I fix your hands."

"Fix 'em?"

"Yes. Sure. I fix 'em."

She very deliberately took his big dark hand in hers and beside it she placed her other, slim, white, polished. Giorgio laughed out at the contrast.

"I see!" he cried, curling his great paw about her fingers, below the table. She did not object to his holding her fingers, but as he made no further suggestion, she drew her hand away after a minute. Actually Giorgio didn't know how to proceed. He was unaccountably stirred by this girl's coldness, and he would have liked to take some measures to move her to a display of feeling. It irritated him that his wife and Manuel were there.

The cabaret was finished amid a clamour of applause, and the shining, diaphanous girls withdrew. Waiters

began to hurry about. Everybody's interest returned to the small tables at which they sat. Manuel finished the contents of his cup; the others did likewise. The music of the jazz rattled and swayed through the temple again, and Manuel and the little blonde stood up.

"Well, good-bye," Manuel said, holding out his hand to Angela. "Remember me t' the folks." Then he turned to Giorgio. "We got t' go after this dance," he said. "How long're you goin' t' be in N'York?"

"Oh, we leave f'r home in the mornin'."

"Back to the seaweed, eh?" Manuel laughed.

Giorgio shook hands and nodded without a word. It seemed to him that the boy had expressed it exactly: back to the seaweed!

"Thanks for the drinks!" Manuel cried, starting away.

The little blonde girl bowed calmly, smiled calmly, and started after her partner. It hurt Giorgio to see her go so unemotionally. He wondered how Manuel could stand it; then it maddened him to think that perhaps Manuel didn't have to stand it—perhaps she saved her emotion just for him.

Mr. and Mrs. Vinti soon left the white marble temple and stepped out into the mild May night of Broadway. About them was a brightness as of day, but the heavy, crowding shadows were such as no day ever held. At the first crossing, Angela paused and turned and looked back, but the great white temple was lost in the pervading glare. Then they wandered on again, their eyes turned aloft to the amazing bright antics of words and fountains, automobiles and animate creatures performing against the back-drop of the sky.

At last they arrived at the hotel.

It was the third night since their marriage.

Giorgio was unwontedly stimulated by the cocktails and by the little blonde girl; and that night Angela realized, for the first time, with terror, the intense passion, the sensual grossness that lay hidden beneath her husband's recent kindness.

XXII

On the following day Giorgio and Angela returned to the island. It was not a happy journey. Only four days ago Angela had been possessed of a great faith and hopefulness for the future. Now her hope was dead. She had come to know, in a clear flash of terrified understanding, unmistakably and for the first time, the man who was her husband. On this journey that man said little to her. He had said, the night before, words that still rang in her ears—unforgettable words that had left her shamed and scarred, had robbed her of her virtue as a wife, and made her merely a partner of his vicious passion. His passion had scarred her physically; some substance of her being had actually been destroyed in that horrible hot fire; there were spots upon her face and upon her body where his kisses had burned, that tingled yet, and she was sure that her shame was visible to the world.

The past was done—there was no possibility of return. Some essence of her life had been changed, as in a chemical process; she could never be the same again. The future, too, seemed done—still-born, monstrous, hideous—and yet it lived, grotesque and shameful, always to be endured.

From the mainland Giorgio telephoned that they were arriving, and when they landed from the little ferry, his

Ford machine with the light truck body was at the wharf to meet them. The ride out to the Fist was made in silence. As the machine climbed out of the marshes into the settlement, the first thing that caught Giorgio's eyes was his raw-looking new house, and the second thing was the ugly-looking steamer of the Fish Trust floating placidly upon the waters of the outer bay.

All Giorgio's energies rushed at once to a point focusing on the menace of that steamer's presence. To combat that menace was not only his imperative responsibility, but his outstanding desire. He changed his clothes without delay and hurried down to his shack on the beach, to hear what news there might be, and to contrive, if possible, additional means of opposing that hovering foe.

The news he heard was not reassuring. Rosario, Rosie's father, whom he had left as foreman of his crews, reported that the steamer had arrived during the Sunday night after Giorgio had gone; that on Monday morning at daylight a crew from the steamer had begun the laying of traps; that half a dozen traps were already laid or were under construction; and that a small shack was being built, over on the seaward beach, to house the crew that would evidently remain to work the traps of the Trust. No, there had been no trouble of any sort; there had scarcely been communication between the men of the two gangs; but Rosario added that some of the new traps had been set down pretty close to Giorgio's.

Vinti at once started on a tour of inspection, taking two men to row him in one of the heavy, wide dories. They pulled, hour after hour, with their short, quick strokes, from trap to trap, and all about the great pound. Giorgio examined stays and moorings, and when he re-

turned, long after midnight, he understood just what his situation was. He had seen only faint indications that the Trust intended to encroach upon him. The sea was free, he considered, and those other traps had as much right to a place as his had; but in two instances the Trust's crew had laid their leaders closer to his than he liked, and outside his—so that, in that particular area, fish running in schools or ordinarily with the tide must necessarily be diverted to the Trust's nets before reaching Giorgio's leaders.

It was a delicate situation; a dozen differences of opinion were possible regarding the rights of Giorgio and his competitor, a dozen arguments and excuses as to judgment and intent. Giorgio admitted to himself that in taking what he had wanted of the shore and waters by right of precedence, he had made the first move in this opening warfare. He felt he had now been attacked, but attacked with the most delicate strategy.

He was afraid to do anything because, in view of the subtlety and cleverness of his opponent, there was danger of putting himself in a ridiculous and untenable position; he was afraid not to do something because of the danger of the further operation of that subtle strategy. In short, he was afraid. He stood alone on the beach in the dark and confessed it to himself. He knew the enormous strength of the Trust, knew its tremendous power, all available to move as a unit and crush the life out of him. He could feel that crushing process instinctively now—the gentle, delicate pressure of that enormous, invisible body, capable, he was sure, of more than his imagination could suggest.

Giorgio's mind leaped upon a nearly forgotten formula; he muttered under his breath, "Damned Yankees!"

The phrase whispered into the darkness meant both more and less than it seemed to mean. For one thing, it was an echo from the past. In the days that had preceded Giorgio's prosperity in this new land, he had applied the phrase to every obstacle that he had then encountered, every staying gesture, every arresting inhibition—everything, in short, that he didn't like or didn't understand, stirred in him a resentment that found expression in that exclamation, amounting to a curse—"Damned Yankees!" That was his protest against all power, all pride and privilege, all good fortune of any appreciable amplitude enjoyed by others.

But those resentments had all evaporated long ago. Giorgio had himself, since those old days, tasted of good fortune and power of a sort, had felt the thrill of pride in a measure that had been sufficient for his peace. He had, in fact, secured a considerable freedom from the arresting gestures and the hindering opposition of the Yankees, and now for more than fifteen years he had not uttered that phrase.

On hearing himself utter it now his attention was pulled up short. It frightened him suddenly, for it seemed like a warning of his coming reversion to all the struggles and miseries of that former time. And it piqued the depths of his secret egotism, for he had more than once, in the recent years of prosperity, congratulated himself upon his likeness to the Americans. It had never occurred to him to become a national of the land of the free, yet he felt that he had caught something of the

Americans' large manner, their trick of making money, and their broad talent for material progress. Secretly Giorgio was rather proud of his Americanism.

But now he saw suddenly that there was nothing American about him; he lived in a tiny community of his own people; he had always done business, as far as possible, with men of his own nationality; as a fisherman he had worked at an immemorial calling of his race; if he had made money here in the United States, that was nothing but proof of the "freedom" that he used to hear so much shouting about in his youth, and always hated.

He had years ago withdrawn from the more direct contest with the Yankees, because in that contest he was continually unsuccessful; he had withdrawn and found a way of his own, and had made success. He had withdrawn so far, in fact, that the land and waters of the Fist had seemed to him to be, not American, but Portuguese. But he had had that all wrong. He was Portuguese, not American; the land and waters were American, not Portuguese. Doubtless in the old days he had learned something of the Yankee manner and the Yankee method, but—he had withdrawn, and in withdrawing he had ceased to learn. Since then, while he had been progressing, the Americans had been progressing too—by leaps and bounds. They had, for instance, abandoned the crudities of competition in business and had created instead the subtle and immense strength of combinations; had welded the individual abilities of countless men into a machine, a weapon—some incomprehensible force for the accomplishment of their superhuman ambitions.

Now Giorgio found himself alone, in competition with the Yankees again, alone before the Trust. He looked

the chimera in the face. It was not American, though American-made. It was greater than any nation, for it had no prejudice of patriotism; it was greater than men, for it had no emotions; it was greater than man, for it was unified. It stood deliberately barring the way of Giorgio's progress. He must take up again the struggle that he had escaped from long ago. Formerly it had been a struggle of achievement; now it was to be a struggle of preservation; and before the massed strength of his opponent, he perceived all his achieved pride and power to be insignificant, inadequate for the contest.

At last he turned up the beach with weary steps, dragging his stick as he went. He wandered along the road, past the house where his wife slept, and came at last to his gaunt new house showing pale in the dim light. Giorgio stared at the outlined monstrosity, wondered that he had once been enthusiastic for its erection, remembered what he had intended it to be—the crowning glory of his pride. He moved about it, stumbling over rubbish-heaps, observing from every angle its crude resemblance to a dwelling. It appeared larger than it would actually be when completed. The flashlight he had used in the inspection of his traps was still in his pocket. He took it out and flashed the beam of its light about, seeking an entrance to the building, then mounted heavily the plank that slanted up from the ground and led through an aperture between two joists where some time a door would swing.

As he moved, perturbed and unhappy, through the spaces that would be rooms, he wondered vaguely who would ever occupy these chambers. The house seemed like a ruin—vacant, meaningless, impossible. It was as

though the reasons for its erection, if there had ever been any reasons, had ceased to exist. Well, the reasons had all existed in Giorgio's brain; the erection of the house had depended upon Giorgio's own intent. Ah, yes! He had built it to be the crowning glory of his life, the monument of his complete and proud success; but he saw now that his life and his proud success had been illusions; he had imagined them to be important, and they were nothing; the house was nothing but the symbol of his folly.

"Damned Yankees!"

He moved to one of the oblong window spaces that showed pale in the surrounding darkness, and looked out over the little settlement of the Fist. It seemed to him then the most pitiful place he had ever seen—those harsh, ugly houses, that drab, useless existence. Yet he had been content here for years, and here he had built that incredible illusion of his pride.

He did not stir for a long time, but stood, feeling ancient and alien, and watched without seeing them the barely discernible lights on that hovering ship in the bay. Incredible illusion! It had deceived him through the years—he had deceived himself through the years. Like a drug, it had filled him, body and soul, with the glamour of dreams, had induced him to build this house and to take a wife.

His wife! Giorgio knew promptly, clearly, that he had not wanted a wife. He had somehow been misled. No, he did not want her any more than he wanted this house. And she did not want him. No. When he had gone to her as a husband, in his true guise, revealing himself without pretence, as a man should be able to do with his wife, she had withdrawn, cowered away from him in

loathing and disgust. That had hurt him strangely; it had been a revealing episode—it had been the first of these successive blows at his splendid illusion.

Neither he nor Angela loved the thing the other had proved to be, and now there was no escape for either of them. Their only course seemed to be to compromise, to bear, on the best terms they might be able to hit upon, the unlovely situation in which they found themselves. But Giorgio could find no basis for such a compromise.

He did not blame his wife and he did not blame himself for their mutual incompatibility, yet his mind demanded that someone be blamed, and it turned on the old woman, Angela's mother. He laughed sourly as he thought of her. There, he told himself, had been a desire and an illusion equal to his own. The old woman had been capable and clever, as he, in his way, had been, but not quite so clever as he, for she was dead—or (who could tell?) perhaps more clever, more wise, for she *was* dead—had died in the full madness of her ridiculous ambition.

That was it, Giorgio said to himself, nodding. He did not object to the illusions—any of them—if they could only have lasted till he was done with them. But to lose them! To go on without them!

The grey of morning was growing in the sky. Giorgio roused and felt the chill wind upon his face. The stars were fading. He could discern a light over at the foot of the bluff where Santos' Joe was already going out to the morning's milking. Giorgio turned away from the window and fumbled his way through the house, smelt the acrid stench of mortar and lumber, descended the slanting plank, and went home.

The Grania house, now his temporary abode, was dark and silent. Angela was sleeping. Mr. Grania was not yet up. Giorgio had come in for what should be his first night's sleep under that roof. It was different from what he had expected. Suddenly he felt homeless, outcast—as if he had been shorn of all the appurtenances, interests and relations of his recent splendid existence and was doomed to go alone for ever in a stark world, miserable and filled with fears, stalked by the constant menace of the Trust and by the accusing eyes of his pitiful wife.

He did not go in to his wife where she slept, but moved quietly along the dark hall to the room at the front of the house, and threw himself down, in his clothes, on the old horse-hair sofa which filled the space where Mrs. Grania's coffin had stood.

XXIII

Giorgio waked at ten o'clock that morning to the calm acceptance of his fate. During the hours of sleep his subconsciousness, surveying the field of his defeat, found means to assure him that he had not encountered disaster. All the dark colours that he had seen his career painted in were there, truly enough, but he grasped that they were not, for the most part, new colours. His struggle with the Fish Trust was a new affair, of course. It had given a large new background to the present phases of his existence, but it had not yet in any manner changed the character of that existence; it had, in fact, merely given it a different aspect, a different relief. To everyone but Giorgio himself, the new house was the crowning glory of a commendable success. His neighbours looked upon him and applauded his pride. Where, then, was his failure? His Americanism? Well, yes; most of the inhabitants of the Fist would have been puzzled and amused at his notions about being like the Americans. They all copied and imitated American ways and manners, but it was only the surface manners that they thus imitated. A deeper understanding would come only with the new point of view of a later generation. If his neighbours had actually come upon Giorgio's pride in his Americanism, they would have put their fingers upon it at once as a self-deception,

and would have promptly proved him Portuguese. No, they all saw him as he was, and regardless of any different thing he might have thought he was or wished to be, they applauded him for that. His injured pride took firm hold of this at last, as of an assurance. He must, he saw, continue to keep up appearances.

As to his relation to his wife, his neighbours would have laughed at that too, if they had known. Any man of common sense ought to be able to manage his affairs with his wife—either by establishing his authority or by submitting to hers. Giorgio could have had any woman there was, and he had taken the one he had wanted. People felt, secretly, that he had chosen the best of the lot. What more was there? Just a little management. . . .

He found that he had determined in the night that for the present he would make no move against the Trust. For the present his job was to work and watch and wait. He would make a strong and consistent sort of passive resistance, maintain his position, ignore the presence of those others, and sell every fish that came to his nets at the best price obtainable.

Presently he heaved himself up from the sofa and, feeling a little stiff from his rest on that narrow couch, he went into the kitchen to shave and wash up. Angela, who knew from the presence of his hat and stick in the corner that he was in the house, had hot water ready for him and a clean towel over the back of a chair by the sink. At once on his appearance she began without a word to prepare his breakfast. At first Giorgio felt inclined to reject her every gesture of service, but there was something novel and satisfying in the simple ministrations of his wife that he could not deny himself the pleas-

ure of. He shaved in silence and washed noisily, then dried his face and neck, his arms and hands, with a dozen large flourishes of the clean white towel. He threw the used towel over the back of the chair where he had found it, and then he stood embarrassed, needing a comb and knowing that he had none. He had used Angela's comb during their honeymoon. Angela perceived his need (Giorgio was amazed at her perceptiveness, of which this was one evidence) and led the way into the room off the kitchen which had been given up by Mr. Grania for use by Angela and her husband.

"You'll have t' use mine," she said simply, without looking at him, and she held it out for him to take.

Giorgio, without a word, combed his hair before the mirror in his wife's room, and returned to the kitchen for his breakfast.

The breakfast was good and Giorgio ate heartily, for he was hungry, but he ate with a critical appetite, testing the qualities of this first meal prepared by his wife. His judgment was all-approving, except that he liked a little more salt, and that was there at his hand in a small white saucer.

It was a good breakfast, he said to himself as he proceeded, and his mind became occupied with the aspects of his relation to this girl who prepared it. He compared her, crudely but without levity, to other housekeepers who had served him, but one division of his mind vaguely rejected the idea of such a comparison and struggled to formulate a defence of this woman, his wife. She was his wife, and he became sensible of a thought, dimly stirring in him, that on that account no other housekeeper he had ever had could be compared to her. *She* was his

wife! That was, at last, the main motif of her defence, emerging from his consideration of her status; nothing more than the plain statement of that fact—*she* was his wife!

Yes, well, was she?

He left the house very soon, and all that day he went about his work unconsciously thinking of her, of his relation to her, of the terms of his necessary compromise with her. The phrase, *She was his wife!* kept repeating itself over and over, as in a dream, and sometimes rising into his conscious mind. It seemed repeatedly to be stated with new vehemence, new significance.

Then he was pulled up short in the act of lighting his pipe, at perceiving a second thought that was rising, like a visible figure, out of his subconsciousness. Giorgio was perched on the bow of a dory at the water's edge, and the wind was blowing stiff along the sunlit beach. It was necessary for him carefully to cup the light of the match in his hands. From habit his hands protected the little flame for a moment, but he made no attempt to light the pack of his pipe, for all his faculties were intently concentrated on that figure rising out of his inner mind. Unconsciously he threw the match into the water, took the pipe from his mouth, and sat looking at that vision—that figure—no, there were two figures—two young men—his sons.

Giorgio sat there minute after minute, gazing out across the bay as across a space of time, and he neither saw nor heard his men about their work. Instead, he saw two babies lying helpless in a cradle; two dark-eyed lads in knickerbockers, playing on the sands; two older laughing boys who called to each other as they fished

from separate dories; two youths who puffed at pipes and went striding along the beach in high boots; two young men, named Vinti, strong, dark-haired Americans, who talked with the voices of masters—who were masters of sea and shore.

Giorgio waked from his vision into a sentimental mood. He had seen his sons, who now would never be born. He yearned for them, but they were doomed to take their places in the long procession of his unborn children. Giorgio was again overwhelmed by a sense of the wasted years. And the future doomed to sterility! And yet . . . It all depended on the terms of the compromise he could make with his wife. Yes! He yearned for his sons.

He emerged from his sentimental state forthwith—emerged to a sort of gaiety, for he told himself that a way could be found. Laughing at himself, he acknowledged that he had been a fool to play at pride and to make a pretence of Americanism; but he assured himself that he was not yet dead, and he might yet have something to be proud of. "My sons!" he whispered, with shining eyes; and then he laughed softly to himself. "My sons!"

Toward noon his foreman, Rosario, came to him to report on the morning's work, and Giorgio took the man by the arm and led him away down the beach, listening while the other talked. When Rosario had finished, Giorgio turned to him.

"You got a son?" he asked.

Rosario looked at him with startled eyes.

"I had," he said simply.

"Yes, I know." Then, gripping Rosario's arm tightly, Giorgio said, "Listen! I seen him in N'York."

Rosario began to tremble with eagerness. "Where? When? Manuel? In N'York? Ah, you sure 'twas him? My boy! He ran away from home! I don't know why. Tell me—he is well?"

Giorgio told of his encounter with Manuel. He refrained from stressing the presence of the little blonde girl, but he told of the boy's good clothes, his good looks, and the good time he was having—the good time they had had together. "I knew," he concluded, "you'd be glad t' hear about your son."

He spoke as if he understood perfectly how a man felt about his son; as one of a confraternity speaks to another—casually about esoteric things.

"Yes," Rosario remarked dully, "I'm glad t' hear. He's a good boy—Manuel. I want him t' have a good time, but I wish I had him t' home." The old man spoke wistfully.

They turned up the beach together and Giorgio felt a deep sympathy for this man who had lost his son. "It mus' be pretty bad," he thought, "t' have your son run away from you!" Actually, he didn't see why Manuel should ever come back.

Rosario was preoccupied. He said he'd go up to the house to dinner, if the boss didn't mind. He hadn't been at home for nearly a week, and Rosie was all alone up there. Things had been too exciting for him to leave the men. . . . And Giorgio, filled with an unusual and pleasant sympathy, told him to go ahead; said he needn't come down for the night shift if he wanted to sleep.

Rosario nodded, murmured "All right," and went off up the beach.

XXIV

Giorgio remained on duty himself for the work that night, went out alone in a dory and hovered about the edge of the lantern glow, watched the cataracts of fish tumble and slide, like shining waterfalls, from the heavy nets, watched the men straining at their work. All around and outside the labouring movement of his crew was a great silence, a great peace; the Fist rose like a shadow of enduring strength; stars glimmered in an eternity of assurance; and out there somewhere in the oblivion of hovering Time, Giorgio was aware that the souls of his sons were waiting, watching, trembling with eagerness to be born into the world of men.

When the work was finished he went home, just before dawn, went into the quiet dark house and sat down in the kitchen, outside the room where Angela was sleeping. His mind was full of the vision of his sons, and yet he hesitated to open that door—hesitated in a new mood of diffidence to approach his wife, grown suddenly conscious of the grossness of their late physical encounter. He must wait; he must speak to her of his sons, so that she would understand; he could not risk her mistaking him—could not risk again rousing her loathing and her terror.

He rose, at last, tired and heavy with sleepiness, went along the hall to the room at the front of the house, and slept on the horse-hair sofa.

It was noon when he waked, and again Angela served him at breakfast. She was aloof; he was aware of her aloofness and of some tangible quality in her that he had never sensed before—some gentleness, some delicate, tender, appealing thing that made him seem stupid and heavy beside her, yet made him feel, too, that she was dependent upon him because he was just what he was.

There was that appeal, drawing him to her; there was also a barrier, keeping him away. Her silence indicated the presence of the barrier; his own inability to find the right thing to say also indicated it. They did not look into each other's eyes. They did not face each other bravely or hopefully. Giorgio knew that it was Angela's barrier of self-protection that stood between them. He had caused its erection and he must bring about its removal. He did not know how to do it, but he wanted to do it. For the present he could only be gentle with his wife, hoping that she might lose her fear of him and be reassured. It would take time, and he was impatient for his sons' sake; but before that vision of his sons his wife became suddenly, strangely dear to him, lovely and mysterious, taking on somehow a part of the unreal reality of those strong young men who went on the beach with commanding eyes—those young men who would love her and save her from all pain and indignity, whether of his infliction or another's.

As Giorgio started for the door at last, his mind was still full of these sensed significances. Angela arrested him by asking, nervously, "Are you comin' home to-night?"

He was confused at her question—confused at the

sound of her voice and confused at her question because, with his mind full of thoughts of his sons, he wondered if the question could possibly mean more than it seemed to mean. But looking at his wife—a swift glance—he perceived that she was thinking of her housekeeping, and he replied at once, "Yes. I'll be home all night, prob'ly."

"I'll fix a bed in the front room," she said, "if you want t' sleep there."

Giorgio watched her as she busied herself about clearing the table, and he was swept by a swift impulse. He was on the point of telling her that he didn't want to sleep in the front room; but he had, as promptly and swiftly, a vision of her turning upon him a quick, startled face of fear. So what he said was, in a murmur, "All right." Then he went out of the house.

He had expected that Rosario would be at the beach to manage the morning shift of men who packed and shipped the day's fish, rounded up the lobster-pots, replaced nets, and did the hundred jobs on gear and tackle that can best be done in daylight; but when he arrived at the shack, he found that Rosario had not come down. The necessary work had been done, but Giorgio was, nevertheless, angry. What did Rosario think? he wondered. Did he expect his boss to do his work for him? If he wanted his job, he'd better attend to it; if he didn't, well! . . . Giorgio had a notion of discharging his foreman at once—had a notion of sending one of the men to Rosario's house to say that the foreman could sleep a week if he wanted to, he was fired. But he soon became more sensible and he didn't send the message. Rosario

was a good man. Perhaps something had happened—perhaps there was something the matter. Well, if there was, he ought to send word, Giorgio grumbled. Finally he decided to wait and see.

When the men were called in for supper, Rosario had not yet shown up. Giorgio went in and ate with his crew in surly silence. Then, later, as the darkness began to gather and the night shift began to prepare for work, Giorgio took his stick, strolled up the beach, and started toward the house of his foreman.

The road through the settlement was already dark. Lights shone in only two or three of the houses. People were going to bed, for these were busy days for the farmers and they were up early in the mornings. The Rosario house, when he came to it, was dark like the night. Giorgio went around to the rear, expecting to find a light in the kitchen, and as he went his anger rose against this man he had come to see—against this man's unconcern for him and his affairs. There was no light anywhere in the house. He rapped on the back door with his stick. After a moment he rapped again, and very soon a light was struck within. Immediately after Rosie opened the door for him.

At sight of Rosie, Vinti was shocked and angered. Coming along the road, he had anticipated an obsequious reception from his guilty foreman, had seen himself reducing the man to a state of abject subservience by a cold statement of indubitable facts—facts about his foreman's job and what his foreman had better do if he wanted to hold it. Now, at sight of Rosie, he trembled with an intenser passion, for the appearance of this girl instead of her father was an act of effrontery, an insult.

For a moment he couldn't speak, his anger choked him; and Rosie stood there, maliciously amused to see him before her door, waiting for him to say whatever he chose. But he didn't speak as the moments passed, he couldn't; and at last she remarked airily, "Oh, it's Mr. Vinti!"

"Where's Rosario? Where's your father?" Giorgio demanded, gripping his stick.

"My father?" Rosie repeated quietly. "Come in an' I'll show you."

Show him! Show him! Giorgio suddenly wondered if something had happened to his foreman, wondered what it was she was going to show him; and as he wondered, he stepped into the kitchen.

Rosie wore an old brown dress comfortably open at the throat. Her hair was smooth and full of lustres. She moved easily, confidently, away from the door and set a chair for Vinti. Then, without a word, she went out of the room, leaving him alone.

He watched her fade out of the light through the doorway, and he suddenly recalled their last encounter together on that night, months ago, when she had come to his house on the beach to propose that he make her his wife. He recalled how they had quarrelled, how she had rejected his alternative proposal.

Rosie returned to the room in the midst of his memories, holding in her hand a slip of paper. She handed this to Giorgio with a large free movement of her arm, and it was not until his fingers closed upon the paper that his mind cleared. He held the paper close to the lamp and with difficulty read the crabbed writing that it bore:

"Rosie—I am gon away to fin Manuel I aint comin back til I fin him. Vinti seen him in New York Tell V ware I an gon too."

Giorgio laughed out at the irony of it. He had robbed himself of a foreman by his fool talk about the foreman's fool son. Fool talk, yes; for what did he care about Rosario's son? Or about Rosario, either—except as a workman? He grunted and looked at Rosie.

"When did he go?" he asked.

Rosie shrugged. "That's all I know," she said. "He was gone this mornin'."

A fundamental antipathy existed between Giorgio and this girl; they could not meet without an exhibition of antagonism. Now at sight of him Rosie's smouldering hatred rose and governed her. He had rejected her and chosen that other woman for his wife; she could never forgive him for that.

"This is foolishness!" Giorgio exclaimed. "He'll never find him. He don't know enough t' look in the right place."

Rosie shrugged again. "It leaves you without a foreman," she said, and she smiled as she said it.

"Yes, for a time," Giorgio answered, "but I c'n work."

"For a time?"

Giorgio looked at her quickly. "Why, he'll come back, o' course," he suggested.

"Maybe," she agreed. "But he says he won't come back till he finds Manuel, an' you say he'll never find him. P'raps he'll change his mind, though."

Vinti looked at her with curiosity. "It leaves you all alone here," he said.

"Oh, I'm used t' bein' alone. You've kep' him away most o' the time."

"But this is different. Did he leave you any money?"

"I don't know," she smiled. "I ain't been in to the bank."

She was light about it all. She did not seem to be impressed or worried. Giorgio could not understand these Rosarios. He shook his head. It was a queer breed.

"What makes 'em all run away?" he asked.

"I'm sure I don't know," she said casually, "unless they run away from me."

Giorgio nodded. He looked up at her quickly, sharply. "You ain't married yet!" he exclaimed.

"No. An' you are!" she countered smoothly.

She laughed as she said it, with the air of one who has fortunately escaped a catastrophe suffered by one's friend, for whom, under the circumstances, one has no sympathy. Her laughter and her manner struck into Giorgio—irritated him, hurt him, made him want to strike back at her. She seemed insignificant to him; yet she hurt his pride. In a flash he felt that she knew all about his present unfortunate relations with his wife—felt that she sensed it with her woman's intuition, and knew. He seemed to see that she was herself glad to have escaped being his wife. He saw her, in fact, standing aloof and superior now, pitying the woman who had not escaped that fate, and very proud of her own uncompromised freedom.

The situation was, for Giorgio, maddening. He remembered advising Rosie to remain free, and she had accepted his advice. Now, at her exhibition of pride in

her uncompromised freedom, he was envious of her. He was not free himself; it maddened him unaccountably. In effect Rosie had sneered at him and his wife, and he would have given much at the moment to render her incapable of sneers like that. He wondered why he had kept silent about her visit to him in the night. That silence had been a mistake, he saw, for women like Rosie were only safe when kept in their subordinate place. He wanted to put her in her place now, assuring himself that it was not for her to be proud in the presence of him or his.

He said nothing, but stood and looked at her with an intent voluptuous look, gazed full into her face, let his eyes wander up and down and all over her body—slowly, appraisingly—till they returned to her face, where they rested. He had the immediate satisfaction of seeing the blood mount hotly over her uncovered throat and cheeks; he knew that she understood the insult of his scrutiny. He turned away with a chuckle and remarked, "You ain't been t' see me lately."

He had effectively struck at Rosie's pride. She thought of many things in that minute of his scrutiny, chief among which was a similar long look that her brother Manuel had bestowed upon her with a cool and coarse suggestiveness. Her next remark was a remark of self-defence.

"Marriage ain't made you any better, has it?"

"Better!" he cried, his self-esteem now bolstered up again. "Better! How could it? There was never anythin' the matter with me!"

"Your wife mus' be a fool t' let you go on thinkin' so," she retorted.

It was like the cut of a whip for Giorgio, and it left him tingling with angry pain. It was too sharp with truth—his wife had not let him go on thinking so. But he paused before he spoke.

"Mrs. Vinti needn't bother you an' I," he said.

Rosie laughed, knowing that she had scored; and yet her attention, in the midst of her satisfaction, was caught by Giorgio's remark. The words had for her, vaguely, a double meaning. Just what their suggestion of a suggestion was she could not at once determine, but it was there, she told herself. Perhaps he had not meant it, but she had caught it, nevertheless, and with it she had caught an idea.

She said nothing, for her mind was too tensely occupied with the significance of that phrase, "Mrs. Vinti needn't bother you an' I." She stood looking at Giorgio, and he waited for her to strike again; but she said nothing.

He stirred at last. "Well, I got t' go," he said, taking up his hat and stick. "Tell your father, when he comes, I want t' see him right away."

He went out without waiting for further civilities. She made no motion to stay him, but let him go, let him open and close the door himself.

XXV

Soon after Giorgio's departure Rosie went to bed and lay awake in the still darkness; before her mind there unfolded a panorama of events that had touched her and stirred her in the recent months. In this review she beheld outstanding the incidents of Manuel's departure, of her father's disappearance; of her visit to Giorgio's house and his visit to her house; of Joe's package; of her relations with Angela. The persons nearest to her seemed to have touched her most lightly, and now they interested her least. These others—Giorgio, Joe and Angela—had affected her deeply, had each left a mark upon her, had still the power to stir her emotions. The strands of those three lives had become inextricably entangled with the strand of her life; and the strand most entangled with her own, the strand most constricting, most hateful, was the strand of Angela.

Rosie grew hot with the bitterness of her hatred as she thought how this other woman had crossed and recrossed upon her way, always to her detriment, her pain and her loss. She was aware that she—Rosie—had never, never for a moment, actually hurt that other woman. She seemed, in fact, incapable of touching her; for though she had struck back once, in her affair with Joe, she had not then been able to reach. In her affair with Joe it would have completed the splendour and the satisfaction of success to know that in winning him she had taken

possession of the man who, to Angela, was the most precious thing in the world. But she had missed that and all other satisfaction in the event, and her failure to hurt Angela had been but an insignificant portion of Rosie's resulting pain.

But now . . .

Rosie lay and contemplated another blow. If struck, it would be a blow direct, with all her energies, all her strength, all her life put heartily into it. There would, this time, be no love of her own to deflect it, no sentiment behind it but hatred. She would put into it all she had and all she was, and though it would never hurt Angela enough, she was sure that it would hurt.

Yet with all her hearty good will to strike, she might never get the chance. It depended on Giorgio. He was to be her weapon. But would he let her use him for a weapon? There was his long scrutiny, and there was his remark, "Mrs. Vinti needn't bother you an' I." It all depended on what those two things could be made to mean. It depended on Giorgio, but she must find the means to make him compliant. She thought, tentatively, that she might go to him for money—perhaps he owed her father money—he had mentioned money himself. When she had last approached him . . . He had mentioned money then.

Rosie saw that if she actually succeeded in reaching Angela and hurting her, with Giorgio for her weapon, she would be unable to stay on at the Fist. Joe would despise her for ever, and she would at once become debased, notorious, outcast. Giorgio was the most terrible weapon she could use—two-edged—but the only weapon there was.

Rosie did not waver in her desire to strike the blow. She desired intensely to strike; if she succeeded she would pay gladly; she would go away. She had wanted to be married, and she had always felt instinctively that that ambition would be lost amid the conflicting temptations and diversions of a city; but now she abandoned her ideal of marriage. That was the price she was willing to pay for a blow at Angela. With a triumphant sense of new courage, she accepted the prospect of escape into an area of larger conflict. She had been afraid of men, had seen herself as the victim of men; but, suddenly now, she was not afraid of men—she despised them.

In that moment Rosie reverted to her true type, threw off the restricting glamours of a culture to which she had not been truly trained up, returned to the normal, untrammelled freedom of her predatory nature.

In that moment she forgot many things that she really knew. She felt strong, and she would not see that in escaping into the world she would be compassing her own doom. Men had shown her with their eyes—Vinti had shown her, Joe had shown her, even her brother Manuel had shown her—that her destiny was bound up in the large handsomeness of her body. Men desired her, but they would not marry her—they did not love her. Now she was eager to fly out into the world that would show her no pity—the world that would invite her into its by-ways with the countless long scrutinies of men, and she would meet, greet, court those looks, till at last she should be destroyed by them—her destiny fulfilled. She knew from experience, but she would not now see, that her body was the captain of her soul, her virtue the plaything of her passions. But she put all cautions, all

inhibitions aside, staked everything on the indulgence of her hatred.

That was the measure of her hatred; that was the test of her character and her strength.

In the meantime (so definitely had the Fates agreed upon Rosie's doom) Giorgio was mentally coming on to meet her. He would be the weapon of her hatred. He would be used, without knowing that he was being used, to wound his wife and to drive Rosie to her determined end. Without knowing? Well, he was to be lured and lulled by a sense of dominance—dominance of Rosie's pride—and in all essentials, so far as he could see, he was to escape all harm. The wounds he was to inflict on two women did not seem very important incidents to this man. To this man—this weapon—wounded women had been incidents in the past—he was accustomed to such wounding.

Nevertheless, it was not without a mental struggle that he came to the point of being used. Giorgio had a score of difficult things to settle in his mind. He had, first, to eliminate that vision of his sons, but he found that they could not be eliminated, could not be deliberately put aside. Whereupon, to get rid of them temporarily, he took his first mental anæsthetic, directing the young men's attention and his own to his wife who loathed and feared him. "I can't hurry her," he said to them and to himself. "I can't hurry Angela. She's been scared. I got t' give her time t' forget, an' then I got t' talk t' her so's she'll understand. It's too bad there's got t' be a delay. But it's all right. It'll take a little time, that's all. But I can't hurry her. We got t' wait."

That was self-induced anæsthesia, the deliberate elimi-

nation of an impediment, procrastination for a purpose.

But his sons gave voice: "Is this the way to treat us, then? Is this the way to win the woman's confidence?"

Promptly, then, came forward the blustering defender of the wife he had just implicated, used as a screen. His wife had been insulted! That Rosario girl had laughed at his marriage, had exhibited pride in her uncompromised freedom; she had gone so far as to say, in so many words, that his wife must be a fool. Well, he wouldn't stand by and see his wife insulted like that. No, sir! An' this Rosie! Who was she? A brazen woman who had come to him one night, asking him to marry her. He'd refused, of course—there was only one wife for him! He thought he knew how to humble Rosie's pride. Yes, he thought he knew! He didn't like it, but a man must defend his wife, and you couldn't handle a woman like you could a man. No, there was a different way for women.

That was all self-induced anæsthesia—the anæsthesia of self-righteousness. Giorgio was, technically, about to defend his wife by ruining her enemy.

Damn these Rosarios, anyway! A queer breed! One of the queer things about them was that they were all mixed up in Giorgio's trouble with his wife—at the root of it. There was the father—crazy! If he'd stayed at home and attended to his business, Giorgio would never have gone to his damn house, would never have seen his damn daughter, wouldn't have heard her insult his wife, wouldn't have to defend his wife against her now. She was crazy to insult him, anyway—her father's boss. Crazy! The crazy daughter of a crazy father! Crazy sister of a crazy brother! Well, no, the boy wasn't such

a fool! He knew what he wanted. He seemed to be having a good time there in N'York with the little blonde girl. Ah, yes; the little blonde girl! Giorgio remembered her. In fact he remembered her very well—she was so slim and smooth, so distant and unresponsive—she didn't even respond to the drinks. Somehow she worked him up. He remembered he'd wanted to crush her in his arms, had wanted to make her respond to pain, if she wouldn't respond to anything else—he'd wanted to make her cry out, and then comfort her. Stimulating, she was. She and the drinks had been too much for him that night.

Giorgio's face, reflecting his thoughts, exhibited an absorbed bright eagerness; but now his eyes went hard. Here, he realized, was the root of his trouble with his wife. Too much stimulant! And a Rosario had been responsible for that. Those drinks and Manuel's little blonde friend . . . Damn these Rosarios! He'd still like to crush the little blonde girl for her part in this trouble, but these Rosarios—well, Rosie could pay for all!

The mental anæsthetic of justification was thus administered; full guilt was thus fixed upon the enemy; the touch of clear righteousness was thus added to his cause.

There were other phases of his mental adjustment, all readily translatable into terms similar to these. They fluctuated somewhat, shifted, faded, and brightened, like the ebb and flow of an aurora borealis weaving across the sky of his mind, climbing, creeping, flaming upward toward Rosie as the focal point.

What had actually moved Giorgio to become the weapon for Rosie's blow was that long scrutiny with which he had undertaken to insult the girl. The incep-

tion in his mind of that mode of insult had been spontaneous, and his idea had been, simply, to humble her pride. In his look, when he first flashed it upon her, there was no desire whatever. But in the process he beheld the contours and surfaces of Rosie's splendid body, indicated and suggested, her bare throat, the rich colour of her neck, her shining eyes, her gleaming hair; and something waked in him, stirred, rose rampant. He was filled with desire, as he had often been before.

From what was, for Giorgio, a splendid height, where he had begun to perceive and understand his wife, and where he had beheld a vision of his sons, he sank to the plane of his old carnal desire. The fall was not lightly taken. He was obliged to give hostages to his conscience; and that had never happened before.

As he returned to the beach alone in the dark, he felt, somehow, that between him and Rosie there was an affinity, and though it occurred to him that it was only an affinity of hatred, he knew that there was something other than that on his side. Some day, he told himself, they would fly together instead of flying apart—they would fly together, if only to destroy each other. He was now ready for that encounter, and he wondered how she would meet him.

When, on the following night, he went again to the Rosario house, ostensibly to inquire about his foreman, he went, though anæsthetized, not quite easy in his mind, not quite assured of his immunity from consequences. He might actually then have been put off, rebuffed, dissuaded. But he was not dissuaded—was not even put off. Rosie was waiting for him. He found her no longer aggressive, no longer insulting. He played his cards of

suggestion deftly, he thought—finessing, leading, passing one trick and taking another, until he found at last that he had won his game.

On her part Rosie played with equal skill, took as many tricks as he, and counting up her score finally, she found that she had won her game.

Actually, they had been playing into each other's hands; they had been partners together; there were no opponents present. They clutched at their prizes. Rosie was to strike her blow at Angela and proceed to fulfil her destiny. Giorgio was to render the girl incapable of ever insulting him or his wife again, and was to have the last flashing adventure of his life.

Meanwhile, in the room at the front of her father's house, Angela stood by the bed she had made up for her husband, as arranged between them. There was a fatal juxtaposition between the window of that room and the back door of the Rosario house—just the right angle for observation; Angela, looking out, observed Rosie admitting her husband through that doorway, where she had formerly seen her admit Joe, and already she suffered from her wound.

The weeks passed slowly. Giorgio never used that bed in the front room. Angela gazed at it from time to time—it was the symbol of her deep wound. 'What are you doin' there!" she cried, again and again, on seeing her husband at Rosie's door; but she knew what he was doing—was able to name her wound, and felt the pain of it.

Her body didn't suffer; her body was content. Her mind suffered; every thought moved in the dimness of a great grey shadow. But her spirit—that element of her

being that had aspired and hoped—suffered in an agony of despair. Her aspirations had come to nothing; her hopes were dead. From a present state of desperation she looked forward to a future as stark as a withered field. And the past—she could not look back at the past at all; that pain was more than she could bear.

XXVI

There came then, toward mid-June, a period of extraordinary heat, and an evening that closed a stifling day in which all space seemed weighted with a smothering heaviness. The atmosphere lay in strata, tangible, as if packed about one's body. One was conscious of the effort expended in every gesture. Walls, ceilings, roofs, became intolerable.

After the sun had gone down, Angela went out into the thickness of the night and sat upon a patch of grass upon the incline above her father's vineyard. Beyond the misty masses of the lifted vines, beyond the dipping rows of vegetables in the gardens, spread the vastness of the sky, heavily suspended. There was no wind, there seemed scarcely to be air; waves fell on the shore like reflex motions of exhausted nature. Not a leaf stirred. Insects chirred hotly, incessantly. In a distant sector of the heavens the repeated sharp brightness of heat lightning flashed and faded, like unintelligible signallings in a mysterious electric code.

Angela sat and watched the lightning play in the distant sky, too exhausted to think of her troubles; yet there was a feeling of dim unrest in her lassitude. Her energies were depleted; but some portion of her mind was nervously awake to a hovering menace in the night.

Suddenly her consciousness was caught by the mo-

mentary apparition of a figure in the sky. It was briefly discerned—for just the space of a lightning flash—a figure sensed rather than seen—an immense face and one long arm upraised—the momentary appearance of an incomplete gesture.

Angela was startled by its bizarre resemblance to a human form. It had suggested something, she did not know what; her interest was aroused to see it more clearly. For a long time the flashes of lightning were scattered far and wide, but at last she caught again the black outline of a head, a sharp face in profile, and one uplifted, pointing arm. It was gone in an instant, and she realized that it was nothing more than a silhouette of trees standing far away against the brightness of a lightning flash.

It was nothing, of course—too brief, too indistinct to be anything whatever; but it had been caught by some mysterious blank plane of her being, as by a photographic plate, its very vagueness gave it significance, and under her lassitude she was faintly stirred to a dim attentive wonder.

The process of that dim wonder's evolution into an idea, into a thought leading ultimately to action, was too subtle, too delicate for words. It can only be indicated that for a time her mind (recently so filled with worries, regrets and sorrows, so isolated from contact with the affairs of the world about her, and so occupied with her own unhappiness) wandered vaguely among unreal and mysterious things, unnatural things—the old remembered figures of elf and fairy worlds, returned fragments and personalities out of forgotten tales—giants, sprites, hobgoblins, ghosts. Out of her imagination An-

gela peopled the sky and the heavy darkness till she could feel, at last, the passing of weird presences about her, could sense the movement of incorporeal personalities through the silence of the night.

These floating vague presences developed too smoothly out of the unconscious following of a casually awakened interest to startle or shock her. There was, just then, a recurrent flash of lightning, psychologically timed, the briefest reappearance of that profile against the sky, and that uncompleted gesture of an uplifted arm. The gesture led Angela's thought afar, toward heaven, beyond the sky—to the resurrected Christ, the Virgin enthroned, ranked angels, beatified saints, translated souls, the entire hierarchy of heaven. Among those souls she saw (a vision of her imagination) the soul of her mother, radiant, transfigured, yet somehow frail as the woman's body had been frail in life, watching with solicitous tenderness over her unhappy daughter—watching with tenderness, but unable to comfort her in her sorrow.

Angela sat as one hypnotized. Not once in all the unhappiness that had attended the fulfilling of her vow had she actually forsaken her trust in her mother. She had been constant in her allegiance and her love. Her mother's death had been a shaking catastrophe for which she was responsible; her atonement had been fundamentally necessary for the girl's peace; her vow had been necessary and right. All her resulting pain had been part of a just and inglorious martyrdom.

But it occurred to her finally that this sorrow could not be the thing that her mother had desired for her, could not be the thing that she had died to make her daughter accept. No. If her mother had lived, all this misery

would somehow have been averted. Things had not gone in accordance with her mother's intention. She felt now that if her mother could be reached and appealed to she would, from the depths of an all-seeing knowledge, a new wisdom, direct her child in a path of recovered peace.

The girl had, finally, an unmistakable impression that her mother's spirit was waiting for her somewhere out there between heaven and earth, having come as far as possible in an attempt to succour her daughter. If she, the daughter, could reach out into those still spaces beyond the world to meet that waiting spirit, she would find peace. She looked up at the stars. The night spread away like a great dark land. Somewhere out there her comforter waited. How could she approach that tender, yearning spirit? How could she advance through those starlit spaces? Must she die? She could pray—but she had already prayed! She could . . .

There flashed into her mind a thought which she immediately put away; but it came again, and each time she dismissed it, it returned. It was a sinful thought, filled with unholiness and terror. All the antennæ of her superstitions became sensitive, stirred in revulsion. But in spite of its terror the idea took root in her mind as a dim possibility, attracted her with an unholy fascination, grew more definite and promising, became at last the clear though dangerous way of her release.

She determined to go and see Mrs. Session.

The Sessions were one of the old families of Melton. They could trace their New England antecedents back through more than a century and a half, and that entire

record, in spite of the additions of new blood, was a record of mistakes and failures in the financial field. Repeatedly they had gone into things when they ought to have stayed out; they had stayed out when they ought to have gone in. Only old Howard Session and his wife still remained on the dreary farm, which he worked with Portuguese help, and where she took summer boarders. Mr. Session was a tall, dark, piratical-looking man. His wife was very large, vigorous in spite of her sixty years, but slow and unwieldy, and colourless from a chronic "indigestion."

Mrs. Session had the distinction of being clairvoyant. She was a psychic creature absolutely untutored in the formulæ and aims of Spiritism. She was an item of strongest evidence tending to prove the reality of what is known as spirit-communication, for the outstanding features of her personality were a large simplicity and a puritanism far too strict to stoop to pretence. She knew nothing of professional Spiritism; she was unaware of the practice of spirit-photography; she had never seen a materialization, had never heard of ectoplasm; and if she had known of these phenomena, they would have meant nothing to her, since they had nothing to do with her.

The woman had an Indian control, locally known as the Indian Doctor; and her psychical work consisted principally in the transmission of the Doctor's medical advice. His simple prescriptions of herbs were credited with numerous cures in cases where regular practitioners of medicine had failed. He frequently foretold coming events. From time to time, though rarely, he also delivered through the mouth of Mrs. Session statements

which were clearly spirit-communications, messages from people known to be dead, messages of rational import, the truth of which had been verified in the material world.

The community of Melton gave its faith and credence to the Indian Doctor, and Mrs. Session was regarded with a half-familiar reverence as the priestess of a mysterious cult.

After a mental struggle Angela finally reached a decision to go to see Mrs. Session. Such trafficking was contrary to the teaching of her church; she would be censured by Father Pasquale, scorned by her neighbours, and ridiculed by her husband, if they should find out that she had done such a thing. All her superstitions struggled to restrain her. But in spite of the dangers, urged by something outside herself, she decided to take whatever risk there might be and, as secretly as possible, attempt to reach her mother by this hazardous way.

XXVII

On the morning following her vision Angela rose to another day of terrible heat. Giorgio had not come home in the night; her household duties were therefore of the simplest; but the heat made even the most casual duties onerous. She could not go to Melton on a day like this. She would have to walk when she went, for secrecy; it was almost six miles in to the Session house. No, she could not go to-day. Yet she was afraid that she might lose all she hoped for if she did not go at once. But she could not go. It might be cooler later, but there seemed to be no prospect of that. This heat was terrible. Everything was stifled—dying.

Once during the morning, passing down the hall, she thought she felt a faint breeze blow in from the sea, but it died immediately. She felt it again, half an hour later, and she suddenly took hope that the weather was about to cool. She looked out of the kitchen window, across the baked earth of the yard, and beheld great towers of soft white cloud blown up above the sea, a sign, she was sure, that there was wind out there.

Filled with nervous hope, she went and dressed lightly in a new pink dress and a pale blue hat that had been items of her trousseau and, leaving plenty of cold food for her father's dinner, she went out of the house.

As she stepped into the glare, she paused a moment,

feeling the shock of her plunge into that torrid atmosphere as one feels the shock of a plunge into the sea. Through the heat waves she looked up toward the Fist. In those fields, beautifully ascending to an apex, women were at work, under big straw hats that bobbed and swayed as they moved. Beyond the Fist a great white column of cloud rose, majestic and sunlit. Angela gazed at that immense picture, somewhat dazzled; then she turned and went along the road toward Melton.

It was insufferably hot in the marshes. She seemed there to have descended into a nether Hades of deeper discomfort. She hurried to escape, growing more hot and irritated as she went. Then, just as she rose out of that destroying hot smother, she beheld Joe driving slowly toward her in the big double cart. She was startled and terrified at his approach. Their last meeting had been on that night when she had run to save him from self-destruction and he had misunderstood her motive. She did not now know how to greet him; she was fearful of the manner in which he might greet her. She would have hidden from him if she could, but there was no place. She must face him. Yes, she must face him, but she must never let him guess the pain he had caused her.

Joe came on, and as she beheld clearly again, in a glance, his handsomeness, sensed his manhood, and remembered his love, her pain grew sharp. The renewed realization that she might have had him for her own, but had let him go, hurt her inexpressibly. She had loved him before with the freshness of love and a half-mysterious reluctance to surrender to him; but now she loved him with a great depth of love and a passionate

understanding of all that he might have meant to her.

Feeling these things and realizing that she was the wife of another man, she could not look at Joe as he approached; her face, she felt, was crying out her pitiful story. He was very close now. She could feel his eyes upon her. She could not meet his glance! Not yet. . . . But she was abreast of the horses. She must look up! She could not let him pass without . . .

She raised her eyes to his brown face bent above her, and as she did so, she saw a veil of shadow drawn away before his eyes till the old bright light showed through their visible sorrow. He had been afraid that she was going to pass without a greeting.

In that first instant she took into herself a picture of him which was to remain with her always—the tan of his face and his bare throat under the shaded light of his wide straw hat, the set of his broad shoulders, the balance of his legs as he swayed to the movement of the cart, and the muscles swelling on his arm as he reined in the horses.

She stopped and tried to smile gaily, but her face was betraying her, she knew, as his face was betraying him. He took off his hat, revealing the shine of his eyes, the pale skin of his forehead, and the sheen of his dark hair, and that gesture of gallantry stabbed her with memories that were pitiful and poignant.

"Hello, Angel," he said.

At the words and the sound of his voice, she almost burst into tears. To hear him say that name filled her with gratitude—he might so easily have said her other name. Her spirit rose on that surge of gratitude, rose out of a great depth, and in an agony of desire to recipro-

cate his kindness, she said frankly, "Hello, Joe." She was able to raise her eyes as she said it, and they stood gazing into each other's souls.

For a moment they felt each other distinctly, held each other, as it were, in the glory of an abandoned spiritual embrace, knowing each other's love, knowing the precious beauty of each other, knowing each other's pain. For a moment, without intention or effort, they leaped all barriers and stood alone together above all the disasters of their lives, yielding, accepting, sealing an irrevocable pact of devotion.

Then gradually from that high surge and contact they sank apart, sank down on the surface of memory to a commoner level and the interchange of words.

"Are you happy, Angel?" he asked her.

"Happy? Why—yes," she said.

He knew that she was not.

She had lied bravely, but the agony of it was all she could bear. With that lie, she saw herself sending him away again, abandoning him a second time—abandoning herself.

He talked then of other things, but what they said back and forth doesn't matter, never mattered. Only that surge of emotion, that momentary contact, matters or ever mattered. All other memories were to go down before the significance of that spiritual embrace. For Angela, all sorrows were to be forgotten and all pain was to be found endurable, while the memory of that moment remained.

They parted soon and went along their separate ways; but when she had gone some distance Angela turned to catch a glimpse of him again, and there he was, just

rising out of the marshes at the far side, clear to her view against the green incline of the cliff. She paused to take the distant picture of him into the inmost shrine of her heart, the shrine miraculously prepared for his reinstatement. He did not pause or turn or look back, and she watched him retreat into the distance as into a kind of unreality. Standing there alone, she made a gesture—waved her damp handkerchief aloft—as if to delay him, as if to call him back; but it was as if she were signalling to someone far away in time—some memory, some figure momentarily recovered out of the past, now returning into the past again, perhaps for ever.

She turned at last, with a dull feeling at her heart, and went along the hot road to the Session house.

During the remainder of her long journey reality crowded about Angela—heat and discomfort and an increasing bodily weariness. It was an open road, here rough with sharp stones that rolled angularly, there heavy with deep clogging dust. Along the fences and low banks on either side, clumps of half-dead bushes stood and listlessly watched her go. She was already tired as she passed the little square schoolhouse standing wearily in its yard of arid gravel. A small faded flag hung limp at the peak of the pole. Within the open window spaces she could see the tops of small heads, light and dark, and once she heard a chorus of clear voices answering the question of an invisible teacher.

At the end of another mile she came into the shade of a high privet hedge. Here she sat down on a comparatively cool strip of grass, removed her hat, pushed the hair back from her perspiring forehead, and rested.

She could have fallen asleep without difficulty. In the barnyard beyond the fence, hens were clucking contentedly, and Angela went off into a dream in the hot stillness—a dream of Joe. She was startled into wakefulness after a few minutes by the excited cackling of a hen that, in spite of the weather, had just laid an egg.

Angela rose abruptly and went on. Just beyond the privet hedge the view widened out again across green fields, and then the road dipped into a little valley. As she went she could see on the farther rise, beyond intervening trees, the windmill; and her strength came back with a rush, for she saw the miller, like a sailor, setting canvas to the frames of his sails. She went on with recovered energy. In the bottom of the little valley a clear stream went chugging under the roadway, even in this drought. Along its banks on the right, and clustered along the road, the soft green contours of willows stood. Beyond the succeeding rise of land she again descended into a little valley, and then the long incline of Price's Hill rose before her. Angela stood and contemplated that long rise of quivering road. It seemed more than she could accomplish; she was tired out. Her garments were sticking to her body; her feet felt as if they were blistered from the heat of the road; she was thirsty almost to the point of gasping, yet she did not ask for a drink at any of the houses along the way, for the occupants would surely want to know where she was going—where she was walking, on a day like this. She told herself that she must go on, and as she began to move wearily, automatically forward again in response to that command of her thought, there came down upon her warm damp body an unmistakable cool temperature. It was not a

wind—not at first—but a coolness driven into the dead atmosphere by a strong following wind. Amazed, she looked about her and beheld a darkness over in the north-west sky. She began the long climb of the hill.

It was half an hour before she reached the top of that slow tedious rise that continually flattened out before her. At the top at last, she paused to quiet her heaving breast. Turning, she looked back over the splendid panorama. Straight away before her the fields of the island rolled, like the waves of a green sea, with the gleaming road, like a silken tape, lying along their surface. To the east lay the sparkling blue waste of the ocean. To the west lay the bay—a smooth dark field—dotted with small yachts and pleasure boats like gay bright blossoms. Beyond that lay the mainland with its town and the town's hovering pall of smoke; and over the town, over that quarter of the sea, over the bay and the bulk of the Fist, hung the black and threatening darkness of a storm. Angela could see the shadow of it creeping toward her across the land and the water. It crept, but it came swiftly. Before she had recovered her breath, the windmill below her began to race, wildly, like a demon gone mad; the next moment the wind struck her, went flying past her, all about her, whipping angrily at her clothes, penetrating and chilling her body.

For a moment she contemplated the transformed world where trees now bent and thrashed in a gathering darkness and the sea seemed to rise out of a long calm into a sudden black rage. As Angela looked, a great fork of lightning opened the sky toward the north, giving her a momentary glimpse of the blinding glory of that heaven lying beyond the sky; the crashing of thunders

echoed across the wind-swept earth; veils of rain crept out across the waters of the bay and sea—slowly swaying grey veils that moved, gathered, advanced, blotted out sections of the distant town, the small boats at anchor, the immense spread of waters, the crown of the Fist. . . .

Angela turned and ran at last. There was an element of anger in the ruthless flying forces about her—there was something savage. All around, filling space, was the sound of a mad rushing; lightnings flamed continually, as from wild eyes; thunders growled incessantly in an enormous throat. Angela knew the power that was thus pursuing her—the cruel God, grown angry at her attempt to escape His cruelty—and she was filled with superstitious dread. She began to tremble as she ran.

It was characteristic of the girl that in this outburst of nature she should see the direct intervention of Heaven in her personal affairs, especially the direct intervention of an angry Heaven to prevent her from proceeding in this business that she had always been taught was unlawful and wrong. Already tired out, she spent upon these fears the remnant of her stamina and endurance. Stumbling in her terror, she almost went down, but she saved herself and hurried forward, whimpering. Soon she was under the great elms of Melton. A persistent wild wind worried at the trees; leaves and twigs rattled down upon her in clouds. Then, when she was in sight of the Session house, the rain came beating with an overwhelming sound of hoofs. The great drops stung her flesh as they struck—stung like countless small arrows from the bows of a relentless enemy. In a moment she was wet to the skin. As she hurried forward, puddles

formed under her feet; the road ran with swift rills of water. She expected each moment to be punished for her sin—to be struck down, to be overwhelmed; but she kept on.

Shaken with terror and drenched, she at last reached the Session piazza, stumbled up the steps, and rang the bell. While she waited, pressed flat against the wall of the house, the rain beat into her retreat in sheets, so that her legs and feet were immersed in a running stream. Her hat hung like a limp rag in her hand; her hair was plastered upon her neck and shoulders, and hung in streaming strands about her face.

The door was opened a crack and held against the beat of the storm. Angela squeezed in and pressed the door close behind her, stood dripping and trembling in the dark hall, looking dazedly up into the luminous patch of Mrs. Session's face. For a moment neither of the women spoke, but stood listening together to the roaring sweep of the trees outside, to the countless sharp hoof-beats of the rain, to the thunder, to the rumbling of an extraordinary tumult that could not be described or accounted for in nature.

They both started convulsively as an intense flame of lightning seemed in reality to play upon the walls about them; then Mrs. Session shouted through the deafening crash of thunder that immediately followed, "You're drenched wet. You'd best come into the kitchen."

The great unwieldy bulk of the woman went swaying slowly along the hallway, and Angela, supporting her shaken body with a hand upon the wall, followed her as one who walks asleep.

XXVIII

An hour later Angela and Mrs. Session sat opposite each other across a square green-covered card table in the big parlour of the Session house. It was past one o'clock.

In the meantime Mrs. Session, out of the goodness of her heart, had given Angela her dinner and had helped her to dry her clothes. There was always a fire in the Session kitchen at midday; the Sessions always had a hot dinner at noon. Out of doors the storm had continued to rage and pound for a long time, seeming to absorb a great portion of Angela's dull attention, but it had gradually passed over; with its passing, the girl had revived and responded to Mrs. Session's kindness.

During all this time it had not once occurred to the older woman that her visitor had come on any business whatever. She saw in her only a draggled young thing who had come terrified to her door to escape from the storm. It was only in these last ten minutes that Angela had made her understand the purpose of her visit. On thus understanding, Mrs. Session had at once turned from her work, led the way along the corridor into the parlour, motioned Angela into a seat by the green-topped table, and had herself taken the opposite chair, in the alcove of a bay window.

The Session parlour was a long, narrow, high com-

partment with straight walls, except where the tomb-like regularity of its dimensions was broken by this bay jutting out at the side, near the rear of the room. The curtains of this alcove were drawn, closing out the light, as were the curtains of the other windows. A dead air filled the gloom; the floor and the furniture were covered with dust.

It was an outlandish room, a *mélange*, hideous; but to Angela the old-fashioned, worn-out pieces of furniture were emblems of a rich culture. The collection of stiff prints and engravings that deepened the sombreness of the walls deepened for the girl the sense of mysterious elegance existing here. The old black square piano, the bookcases blinded by green curtains behind their glass doors, the stuffed owls, the faded lambrequins and "drapes," all spoke to Angela of ambitions and ideals beyond her conception. It increased for her the mysteriousness of her errand to enter into that atmosphere of decayed refinement, and it contributed to her awe to be in the presence of those seemingly-splendid furnishings.

From a slow survey of the apartment her eyes turned to contemplate its mistress. Mrs. Session's face was turned toward her with concentrated attention. Already, to Angela's mind, she was a different person from the woman who had been so kind to her in the kitchen awhile ago. Her immensity seemed to have taken on new dignity and importance. The woman at once, with her first words, again expanded in all sensed dimensions, for she spoke casually of things beyond life—awe-inspiring and unlawful things.

"I don't know whether I can get you anything from

the spirits or not," she was saying. "You'll have to ask what you want to know when the Doctor comes. Don't be afraid to ask him; he'll help you if he can."

Angela had no clear notion of what was going to happen. She felt inadequate to the performance of her part in this mysterious rite, but she must go on with it now. She folded her hands before her on the table in an unconscious attitude of semi-worship, and looked at Mrs. Session, waiting. The room was very quiet; the house was very quiet. Outside, faint breezes wandered through the trees, shaking down light showers of raindrops, and from some point of roof or spout a slow, regular drip of water fell upon the tin roof over her head, like the tick of a clock measuring eternity.

Mrs. Session leaned back in her chair, which creaked under her weight as she moved, and closed her eyes. She sat so for two or three minutes, while Angela listened to that drip—drip—drip on the roof. She felt uncomfortable, as though she had been left to proceed alone in a strange adventure. Then Mrs. Session's chair creaked again, her hands clutched tightly on the chair-arms, her body seemed to stiffen all over with a long effort, her head was raised into an attitude of haughty pride, and her mouth twitched two or three times to the left side.

Before Angela's gaze the woman's individuality faded away. She might have been epileptically convulsed, she might have been dying; she was not normal, not herself. *She* had gone away. As the girl gazed at her, sounds issued from the woman's lips—guttural articulations that had no meaning—in a voice that was not Mrs.

Session's voice, could not be Mrs. Session's voice—a man's voice.

"Baw—we—no—go—dah."

Slowly the senseless sounds came forth from the emptiness of Mrs. Session's body. They were followed by a silence so intense that the dripping of water on the roof seemed to have taken on a sort of vehemence. Then, clearly, Angela heard:

"Doctor. You want Doctor? You call? Doctor is here. Speak. Indian Doctor listen."

The phrases came clearly but slowly, with long pauses between them. Angela's mind was a chaos; she was both repelled by something unnatural in this phenomenon and impelled by curiosity; she wanted to cry out, yet she could not for awe; she wished that she had not come, tried at the same time to understand the strange transformation of Mrs. Session, was dumfounded with wonder while still endeavouring to formulate a request.

"Speak," the voice said again. "I listen."

Mrs. Session's lips scarcely moved to say those clear deep words.

"I want t' get word from my mother," Angela managed to say through her agitation. Her lips were stiff; she had to wet them with her tongue before they would move. "My mother," she repeated. "She's dead. I want my mother t' help me . . ."

"Mother," the voice repeated, interrupting her, as if impatient. "White girl is in trouble. Name is—name—name is Angella. Angella wants help from mother. Wait."

The voice pronounced her name by accenting the sec-

ond syllable. She thought of this during the brief silence that followed, while she listened to the drip—drip—drip—drip of the rain on the roof. Then the voice came forth again, as from a distance, muttering.

"Sat—no—gah—wan——mass—cut—way." There soon followed something understandable. "Doctor no can find. Little mother no come. No message for white daughter. Indian Doctor sorry. Little mother no come to Angella. Sorry. Yes. No. No message. Wait."

There followed another brief pause in which Angela began to feel disappointed. She hoped that the Indian Doctor had gone to make another search. She felt like a lost child, forsaken and shaken in some deep confidence. Not until she was told that there was to be no message did she realize how definitely she had hoped for and expected one.

"Yes!" the voice boomed out suddenly without preliminaries, startling Angela so that she almost leaped to her feet. It was the unmistakable voice of a warrior. "Yes! Doctor can see—can see—by side of white girl—white boy—white man—at side of Angella. Tall—straight—brave—good boy. Doctor like young brave. He smile. Black hair like wing of crow. Brown eyes—shine like stars—in deep night water. Doctor can see good boy—right side blue like heron's wing—left side gold—gold—like fire—shine. Young brave smile—smile to Angella—white girl. Wait."

In that next brief pause Angela felt her disappointment more keenly. All this meant nothing to her. She had the impression that there stood beside her a young Indian brave, in whom she was not interested except to the extent of a slight distrustful fear. It was her mother she

wanted to hear from. Yet there moved in her an unmistakable curiosity about that other figure. She turned her head as she waited, but there was no evidence for her senses of any presence in her vicinity. Then again the voice boomed out from Mrs. Session's lips.

"Wait! Young man—he say—he speak to white girl—speak to Angel."

At the sound of that name she cried out, shocked into a kind of terror; this impossible performance at which she was present was coming closer to her. There was only one young man who had ever called her Angel. She wanted to run away; but the voice interrupted her, arrested her; it had fallen into a dreamy kind of monotone, as if tired, and Angela followed the sounds in an intensity of interest.

"Young man say—say . . ." The voice trailed away. Angela, tense with eagerness, feared that she was not to hear any more. But the voice resumed immediately. "Young man say—he say—I love Angel—always—always love Angel. Angel—be happy—always. I—wait. Angel—be—happy. I wait. I love—Angel—always. Be—happy. Be—happy."

This was too intimate, too stirring. The repetition of that name Angel was like the repeated thrusting of a weapon into her deepest wound. Be happy! Who was it, in God's name, that wished her happiness? Who mocked her so?

"Who is he?" she cried. "Tell me—who is he?"

"Who—who—who . . ." the voice echoed, like the call of an owl. "Who? Young brave love white girl—always. Who is? Name—name is—is——name is John—Joh—name is—Joe. Wait. Tha's right—yes—

name is—Joe. Loves Angel. Arms aroun' Angel. Joe —he smile. Good white boy—yes—be——happy——sar —bo gish—nay dah. Yes. Man—it—ton—no—— no–o–o . . ."

The voice trailed off into a long silence.

Angela sat trembling, with wet eyes, before a great mystery, conscious of a confused and awe-filled wonder within her, aware of a pressing fear and pain.

Into the silence of her isolation came the creak of Mrs. Session's chair and the sound of the drip on the roof. Angela roused and looked at the woman, whose head drooped slowly forward on to her great bosom. In a moment the woman slumped slightly forward and clasped her hands tensely in her lap; her eyes opened, and in her own returned voice she asked, "Did you get what you wanted?"

Angela shook her head.

"Oh!" Mrs. Session was disappointed. "You can never be sure," she said, as she adjusted her figure in the creaking chair. "I'm sorry. Didn't you get anything?"

"I didn't get anything from my mother. Only somethin' about a young man named Joe."

'D'you know any young man named Joe?"

"Yes. But he ain't dead. I saw him jus' this mornin'. Could the Doctor get a message from someone livin'?"

Mrs. Session looked at the girl for a moment with fixed attention. "I don't know," she said. "I'm sorry you didn't get a communication from your mother."

Angela nodded, and they sat quietly opposite each other for several minutes; then Angela rose and thanked Mrs. Session, gave her some money, bade her good-bye, and departed.

Out of doors everything was washed clean. Little rivulets ran beside the road, the ground was strewn with leaves and twigs. The air was crystal-clear; from time to time faint breezes stirred the trees, shaking down clustered brittle drops like showers of glass. Angela went swiftly, feeling light, feeling free, as if she had been released from an imprisonment.

The experience she had just come through was too extraordinary for her to understand; to be grasped, it would have to be thought over, weighed. She would have to turn its unreality into something comprehensible before she could grasp it; yet it was already becoming vague as a dream. What was clear was this: she had not obtained what she had gone for. Yet the depth of disappointment which it seemed she ought to feel was absent. The message she had received—purporting to come from Joe—was no compensation for the other failure, for it amounted to no more than she had had from his lips and eyes that morning. It had been unnecessary; she knew Joe's love. Yet the message (if it meant anything at all) certainly completed for her the erection of a holy place in her heart, a shrine to Joe, illicit and unlawful, but precious. In contemplating that shrine, she actually forgot, from time to time, the disappointment of her failure to get a message from her mother; yet the two things were distinct and separate, having no relation to each other.

Her mind wandered over the situation incessantly, without understanding.

XXIX

It was a long way from the Session place to the Fist, and constantly, as Angela proceeded, there struggled within her, for control of her life, a sense of hopeless failure, clearly accounted for, and an unaccountable lightness—a mysterious tendency toward happiness. As she advanced on her way, however, she became more and more weary, and despair rose and ruled her. She was returning to the condition she had attempted to escape from; nothing had changed. Joe's assurance of love, which might have been for her solace, only increased her misery, because of its hopelessness, its impossibility. She was returning to a condition of misery, full of shame and pain.

She had still an intense, though vague, desire to run away; she sensed this return to be somehow unforgivable on her own part, a thing not to have been expected of her. She was amazed at her own return, wondered why she should be coming back; but there was no place for her to escape to. Her only possible escape lay in divorce, but the church would not sanction divorce, except on conditions which Angela shrank from facing. If Giorgio would release her she supposed that something might be arranged. She wondered if Giorgio would release her. She didn't see why he shouldn't; he couldn't love her and do what he had done; and if he didn't love her . . .

Her ideas were of the vaguest and she was very tired. As she rose out of the marshes, she trembled with physical revulsion at again entering into her place in the community that lay before her. Her husband's new house seemed to glow in the light of the sun that moved calmly westward toward the distant town, and in front of the house she saw the three Gossips standing, talking together in the road. Their figures indicated the three sides of an irregular triangle, and the broad back of the Stout Gossip was turned toward the girl.

The Thin Woman was talking, but as Angela came into view, draggled and dejected, the woman paused in the midst of a sentence and stared at that approaching figure. The Washed-out Widow and the Stout One turned then, and in a silence charged with importance they watched the girl come on.

Angela was exhausted, too weary to mind their stares, and she would have passed them without pausing, but as she came on, the Tall One spoke:

"Did you get caught in the storm?"

Angela nodded and would have gone on, but the Spinster could not allow that, could not permit this opportunity to pass. She moved a step or two and stood in the girl's way.

"If you been away I guess you ain't heard the news," she said.

Angela paused and looked at her listlessly, without answering.

"If you been away I guess you don't know he's dead."

Thus the Gossips went boldly up to a climax of life, and they now hung suspended, as it were, in a state of intensest interest, awaiting the crash of events. Angela

seemed to emerge from a remote state of being and again come in contact with the horrors of existence.

Dead! Dead! Dead! Something within her seemed to repeat the word interminably, till suddenly with a shock, she grasped its significance. At that, extraordinary fears moved in her mind. Who was *he? Who* was dead? Tremendous consequences seemed to hang upon the answer to that question—consequences having little to do with her, affecting things immensely more important than she. Who was *he?*

In her mind there rose the thought, reflecting a subconscious hope, that *he* might be her husband; yet she feared to hear the fact of Giorgio's death stated. So ardent was her new-born desire for that consummation, she shrank from it with the terror of a murderer. But the death of the only other man who *he* could be was unthinkable. At the mere suggestion of that in her mind everything went black about her, but she struggled against that engulfing darkness, and escaped from it. After an eternity of agony she murmured stupidly, "Dead?"

As if she had been waiting for that word as a cue, the sentimental little Widow burst into a flood of tears and words. "Dead!" she sobbed. "The poor lad! Dead—the strong young fellah, with all his life before him. Dead there in the field, with the rain poundin' on his face an' mud in his thick black hair. Struck down in a minute out o' the hand o' God." She crossed herself and paused a moment; then she began again in a kind of monotone. "I saw him with my own eyes, lyin' under the murderin' sky—the clo's clung tight t' his strong body as if he'd been drowned in the sea, the rain beat him from head t' foot an' splashed on his bare chest.

His face had gone dark with the red blood that was turned thick an' stopped so sudden, an' round his neck a band was burned like the mark of a hot iron. Ah, yes, he's dead, the poor fellah. Out there in the field 'twas me that shut his eyes against the rain."

The woman paused in her talk, but her tears continued to flow. Angela stood and looked at her, and all her life was concentrated in that look. It was Joe that was dead, she told herself, and then she told herself that she had known it was Joe when the Tall Woman had first said the words, "He's dead." But she did not cry out now—she did not make any sound. She had suddenly grown too dull in spirit for expression—as if the supporting strength of her being had been withdrawn, leaving her empty, a rag, a heap, like an empty grain-sack thrown upon the earth. She was numb—somehow shattered—too broken for pain.

"What had he done t' be struck down like that by the hand o' God?" the little woman demanded.

Angela wearily roused to the question, and strangely there formed in her mind an answer which she did not utter. "It's me He was striking at," she thought.

Through her weariness there glimmered the last remnant of her bitterness; she abandoned hope; she knew that God was her enemy. All the evidence of her life tended to prove it. Everything that she had done she had done with the best of intentions, following the path of duty as it had been shown her; but at every turn God had placed a deeper pool of sorrow for her feet. What did it mean? She had heard of the wages of sin, but were these the wages of virtue? She had lost her mother, she had lost her husband, she had lost her lover. Why?

The God to whom she had cried out again and again had not saved her; He had misled her, mocked her in the storm, robbed her of everything, cut away Joe, her last hope on earth, prevented her from reaching her mother, her only hope in heaven.

"Don't be afraid t' cry," the Fat Gossip said to her. "Don't be afraid of us; we saw you that day out on the Fist with him, an' we know how you feel." She said it comfortingly, strangely moved from her aloof attitude of spectator by her memory and her imagination.

Angela looked at her dully. She did not feel like crying. But out of the depths of her being, without her volition, words came, like the testimony of her spirit unashamed.

"Joe was a good fellah," she said. "Too good for me. I married someone else, an' still he loved me. I didn't deserve him, but oh, I wanted him—an' now he's dead."

She turned then in desolation, feeling the bitter meaning of her words, and went on toward her father's house, leaving the three women standing and silently watching her go.

In the kitchen she went over and sat down by the table and began to pleat the red-and-white-checked tablecloth in her fingers. Everything was finished; this was the end. She had come back to this house to move for ever among shadows—shadows cast by the most important realities of her life, projecting backward into the past and forward into the future.

She sat there a long time thinking, yet without concious thought, feeling, yet without sensation, till suddenly there sounded in her brain, startlingly and with

a kind of shocking, mocking terror, the words HAPPY—HAPPY—BE HAPPY! . . .

They sounded through Angela's brain like a refrain—a kind of chorus—the echoes of a deep voice heard booming that day in a darkened room. That refrain rose and rose and swept through her—not through her mind alone now, but through the deepest hidden places of her consciousness as well—rose and swept back and forth, like the beat of great wings, filling her with the cadence of a new hope. She was moved by the sway of that sweeping rhythm. She believed those words to be Joe's last cry—his last cry, a cry to her—beating through her, beating round her, lifting her out of despair into a serene reliance on his everlasting love.

At last she was moved physically—moved to match that lift of her soul—rose out of her chair and stood with staring eyes, absorbed, as if listening—as if about to cry out. Then, swept away by that surge within her and about her, which was more than she could bear, she burst into tears, fell on her knees by the table, and wept as though her heart were breaking. Her emotion was like the precious pain of travail—the birth of a new idea. In her agony she smothered her sobs till she could smother them—could bear them—no longer, and she cried out wildly, terribly, again and again.

But the rhythm of her new idea went moving through her, crushing and rending, killing her with pain, yet soothing her constantly, encouraging her, reassuring her.

BE HAPPY. I LOVE ANGEL.

Angela stood at last in the middle of the kitchen.

Joe's words (she knew now that they were Joe's own words) still rang in her ears, the beat of great wings lifted her up, and her pain was ended. For several minutes she consciously watched herself, as in a dream, soar and escape out of all sorrow and all difficulty, saw herself rising into a warm sunlit sky, below which, like a receding sea, flowed the dark waters of her recent past. Joe had saved her. She believed in him, believed in the power of his love. The words "Be happy" rang in her ears with increasing insistence; they were beating through her in immense arcs, seemed to be signalling to some complementary word hidden in her memory—some phrase to be caught that would complete this experience, complete the circle of their swing, make everything clear to her.

She tried to think, sought for that hidden word or phrase, endeavoured to assist in her own release. At last she caught it, she thought. Yes; it was more than a word, more than a phrase. Suddenly the significance of Joe's last cry came to her, justified, unmistakably true. Her acceptance of it became more than belief—became certain knowledge—conviction. It was verified.

"Are you happy?" he had asked her in the road that morning.

"Happy? Why—yes," she had answered.

She had lied. He had known that she lied, had known that without him she could not be happy; and he had sent her this cry from the barrier of death to reassure her—had himself come back from the barrier of death to save her.

She felt again the contact of their souls out there in the hot road. They had understood each other clearly

then, had known each other in that moment of spiritual insight; and what Angela had known of Joe was the depth of his sorrow for her and the splendid singleness of his devotion.

Suddenly now, as she stood alone in the middle of the room, she stretched out her hand, as if to grasp a hand waiting beside her own, and said softly, "Joe! Oh, my own Joe!" Tears ran down her cheeks and wet her bosom, but they were no longer tears of pain. She understood and believed this mystery of love that was beyond humanity, beyond belief, but was true and hers for ever.

BE HAPPY. I LOVE ANGEL.

Those were his words. He was not dead. He had come back. He was there beside her.

XXX

Joe was dead.

Why had he ever lived? Who can tell? Now he was dead.

After leaving Angela in the road that morning, he had driven back to the Santos place, put up the horses and unloaded his cart, and had then gone out on to the lower rises of the Fist to hoe a small patch of sweet corn in the garden that was his delight. He expended on this garden all the diverted energy of his love; he worked here whenever he could get the time, dreaming meanwhile of Angela in a thousand episodes of sentiment.

In this growing green plot he was able to withdraw from the present and all the world about him. He was so fortunate as to be able commonly to descend into a mental chamber of preserved reality and there find the object of his complete devotion. There Angela waited, just as he had known her—lovely, gay and loving, and with that added mysterious quality which had differentiated her from all the other women in the world. In this inner chamber he heard the modulations of her voice, saw the shine of her eyes and felt their light upon his own, caught each melting shift and change of expression, pose and gesture. Colours, lights and accessories were all there too, parts of the beautiful felicity. In the faint and enriching blur of an intermittent dream he went beside her again.

These were silent times for Joe. Even the muscles engaged in the movement of his body contributed to the happy contemplation of that hidden chamber's reality. Thoughtless, absorbed, he moved and lived with Angela there in a more clear and precious world than thought could ever lead him to; there he smiled and throbbed and murmured with the pleasure of re-sensed delights. He was still rapturously in love with her, though his rapture was tinged with pain, still rapturously happy by her side.

Joe had, of course, other hours, harsh hours of active thought—hours of intensity, when he felt with keenness and despair the position of Angela in the world and his own position in relation to her. Then his mind ran in the circles of extraordinary ideas—the difficulties of divorce for her; the most practical way of eliminating Vinti; the chances of inducing Angela to run away with him; the possibilities of Giorgio's death. They were torturing hours, bringing no consummation but exhausted emotion, self-contempt and despair; and at last he would escape from the futile contemplation of life into the secret chamber of his dream.

This morning, as he hoed the young corn, all the lovely realities of his secret chamber were enhanced and enriched through his recent meeting with Angela in the flesh. His visions of her had been given new reality, new brilliance, new poignancy. The sight of her and the sound of her voice had filled him with new desire, and the brave lie she had told him about her happiness had intensified his devotion.

As he worked, the storm came up with the wildness of a tornado, and the other workers on the Fist, observing

its swift approach, began to hurry down into the shelter of the settlement. They called to Joe as they went, urging him to get under cover, but he laughed and waved them on and continued his hoeing with renewed energy. He hoped to finish before the rain fell, so that all his precious young corn might be well watered after the recent days of heat and drought.

He finished with a satisfied laugh just as the storm broke, and with a glance up at the crest of the Fist showing dim through the rain, he tossed his hoe on to his shoulder and started for the barn. He had scarcely broken into a trot between his new-piled corn rows however, when the heavens opened in a great chasm of lightning, revealing white incandescent depths within the sky, like the opening of a furnace door in an immense darkness. In that instant Joe paused, changed his direction vaguely, threw up his arms, whirled about with heavy, stumbling feet, and fell across the low green rows of corn, with his face turned up to the pelting sky.

Thunder rolled and echoed among the countless hills of heaven; lightning tore through its smothering vapours with the madness of pain; the rain fell in torrents, hammering, hissing, spiteful. In the midst of this fury Joe's hoe had acted as a lightning-rod, and now he was dead—gone down in the flaming splendour of the angry heavens, with the wind and the sea and the thunders roaring about him, and the great Fist looking imperturbably down upon him through swaying veils of rain.

Nature does not often act in a manner so tragically final, and now, by the very extravagance of her method, she had rendered Joe's death somehow unbelievable. The annihilation for the accomplishment of which all

Nature had co-operated had somehow miscarried, for something of Joe had escaped the catastrophe. It was not so strange that Angela should be successively amazed, bewildered, incredulous, in the face of that tremendous assault upon one man. She had left him a few hours before; he had been distant then, but real. She had since had his message through the Indian Doctor. Though it was beyond her comprehension, nothing could have been more real than that.

Angela had become weary of despairs and sorrows; she was ready to believe in some good thing, and, for her, Joe was not now dead as her mother was dead. She could not imagine him, as she could imagine her mother, as the conventionalized figure of a heavenly translation. On the contrary, she still sensed his presence, she could hear his words, she could feel within her the beat of wings that lifted her and comforted her as only Joe had ever comforted her. The past was dead, not Joe. The suffering creature who had been herself was dead, not Joe. No, he was not dead; he was by her side.

In the realization of his presence she was serenely happy. His message to her, delivered through the Indian Doctor and Mrs. Session, had said, "Be happy," and now she was happy. That was the ultimate evidence of her assurance.

So, she stood at last in the middle of the kitchen, with tears flowing down her cheeks, and stretching out a hand to clasp a hand that waited for the pressure, she cried in a quiet voice, "Joe! Oh, my own Joe!" There was no despair in her cry; her tears were tears of peace; for he was there beside her.

XXXI

Giorgio Vinti stood on the beach below his shack, in his sou'wester and short oilskin coat, his feet planted wide apart, and gazed into the grey density of the fog. It had been a busy day for Giorgio. He had foreseen the storm and, in addition to the regular morning work of his crews, he had made a tour of inspection, examining and tightening everything to hold against the coming fury. When the storm had passed he had gone the rounds again, and had tightened up and straightened out the inevitable strain and tangle of gear caused by the wild winds and waters.

In the meantime he had seen Joe go down. His men had been among the first to arrive at the scene of that catastrophe. Giorgio stood now, peering into the depths of the fog with unseeing eyes, and as an aftermath of the day's disaster his thoughts ran vaguely on the mysteries of life and death. The episodes of a man's mysterious coming, his mysterious stay, and his mysterious departure from life ebbed and flowed obscurely through Giorgio's brain, as the tide at his feet flowed obscurely under the fog.

The spectacle of Joe's death had somehow roused Giorgio to wonder at existence. What had the lad's life amounted to? Why had he ever been born? If a man must die at last anyway—if that was the end—what was

the use of striving, as he strove, to build individual success? If that was the end, how was he, with his good business, his money in the bank, his wife and his new house—how was he any better off than Joe? Suppose he had to die to-morrow! What would all his possessions, all his past, amount to then? There must be some *reason* in this business of life, he told himself, but he couldn't find it.

He gave it up at last, and taking the pipe from his mouth, he knocked out its ash with a tap against a beached dory, spat into the fog, turned his steps up the beach and his thoughts toward Rosie Rosario.

When he arrived at the Rosario house, he found it dark and empty, and pausing a moment to consider, he turned away with a cynical chuckle, supposing that Rosie had gone to pray by Joe's dead body. "She'll be back before long," he muttered; in the meantime he'd go over and give his wife some money. He hadn't seen Angela for nearly a week.

He was surprised and piqued to find that his wife had also gone to pay her respects to the dead young man. It was queer, he thought, that both of these women, so differently made—the one so strong and passionate, the other so gentle and still—should be in love with this lad who was dead. He knew how commanding a young fellow like Joe could be to the emotions of women. That was a part of the great mystery of life that he could not fathom; it proved that the reasons for everything were too deep for him ever to find; deeper than any desire or ambition of man.

Sitting in the little kitchen of the Grania house, Giorgio mentally compared himself with Joe. As he saw them—

two men—Giorgio felt that he had a commendable array of assets to show; Joe had nothing but himself. Yet they had been rivals in temperament, and these two fundamentally different women (and other women, too, no doubt) had loved the boy as Giorgio felt that he had never been loved. For Giorgio women had always had only the easy familiarity that lacked all emotion, or the constraint of an ardour that calculated how much he might be worth.

The difference was not because of his age, for he had once been young himself; and now as he looked back it seemed that women had always been the same with him —either unmovedly familiar or gaily calculating. Was it his reputation? No. His reputation had not always been what it was to-day. Character? No, not that either. Chance?

He could not fathom it—it was a mystery—and at last he rose and went out of the house. The secret of this business of life was beyond him. He was suddenly aware that he had never known what life meant.

He went along in the driving fog, unsatisfied with himself, wearied of his argument, yet unable to turn his mind into any other channel. In loving this man who was dead, how were these two women succeeding—what were they getting out of it? And in having their love, where was the dead man's benefit?—he was dead. And if, in loving him like that, the women weren't somehow succeeding, why did they do it?

He became involved. It was useless to think.

He heard footsteps near and he stopped abruptly, to decipher them, as it were. In a moment a dark figure

loomed out of the fog near him, like a shadow, and he knew it was Rosie.

"That you, Rosie?" he asked quietly, by way of greeting.

"Yes."

Giorgio turned and moved along at her side.

"Been over t' Santos'?" he asked.

"Yes."

Giorgio laughed quietly, and for the space of several steps neither of them spoke. Then he perceived that she was not taking the direct way to her house.

"Where you goin'?" he inquired.

"I'm goin' f'r a walk. I want t' talk t' you."

"Why don't we talk in the house?"

"In your house?" she countered.

"We can go into the new house, if you want."

"No. I meant the house where your wife lives."

Giorgio sensed trouble. She wanted to quarrel, and so had become unreasonable. "What ails you, girl?" he asked.

"Nothin'. It don't matter. We can talk on the beach."

They descended to the water's edge. Giorgio wondered what it was all about, but it didn't interest him deeply. He was too tired to quarrel.

"I'm goin' away," Rosie said.

"So?"

"Yes. I'm goin' away an' I ain't comin' back."

"Why not?" he asked casually. "Anythin' serious the matter?"

"Everythin's the matter. Nothin's ever been right.

I don't b'long here—the Rosarios never did b'long here. They're all gone now but me, an' I'm goin'."

"Goin' t' desert the ship, eh?" he remarked.

She nodded. "Yes. They all went off an' left me t' drown; now I'm goin' off an' let the ol' ship sink. I don't owe 'em anythin', do I?"

"No," he agreed. "But you ain't had so bad a time. Where you goin'?"

"N'York."

"Oh! You'll look 'em up, then!"

"Yes. I'll look 'em up an' call 'em down, an' then I'll go my own way."

"Whatever way that is!" he suggested.

"I'll find somethin' t' do," she said.

"Goin' t' work?"

"Sure. What d'you think?"

"What you goin' t' work at?"

"I do' know," she said testily. "If I'm strong enough t' work here, I'm strong enough t' work there."

Giorgio nodded and was silent. He saw that she was destined to become a plaything of men. He knew that kind of women and he recognized in Rosie the temperamental characteristics of the tribe. He was not sorry for her; he was rather glad at the prospect of her departure. "So you've made up your mind! When did you decide t' go, Rosie?"

"I've wanted t' go for a long time, but I been a fool. I never had the courage. Now I can't stand this place any longer. I've got t' go!"

" 'Cause that fellah was killed to-day?"

"Oh, yes, partly. That makes it easier t' go. But that's on'y one thing. There's a hundred others."

"What d'you mean—a hundred others?"

"Well, I been deserted, an' I'm all alone, I've got nothin'. Nobody gives a damn what happens t' me. I can't stand livin' here like this, that's all."

Giorgio drew closer to her. "Ain't I treated you all right?" he asked.

She stood still. "Yes," she said. "But I'm through with you too. I can't stand you any longer, Giorgio."

"No?" he said quietly.

"No. I ain't as much of a fool 's you think. What d'you suppose I ever let you come t' see me for?"

He laughed. "I never know why women let me come t' see 'em."

"I told you that once before. Most of 'em do 'cause they want your money—not you."

"Yes. I remember. That was the night you wanted me t' marry you."

"Yes. You wouldn't marry me, but you proposed that I go an' live with you jus' the same. I didn't like that. I wouldn't. Since then you've come an' lived with me, kind of."

"Yes," he said. "Kind of. Without marryin' you. Time changes folks' minds."

She peered at him through the fog. "D'you suppose I'd come t' like you any more, Giorgio?"

"I don't know," he said carelessly. "I suppose you needed the money."

"No," she answered. "It was diff'rent with me."

Giorgio laughed out at that. "They'd all say the same thing, I guess," he remarked.

With a flaming of her old anger, Rosie faced him in the fog. "I ain't lyin'," she said. "I'm done with this place

an' everythin' in it; I don't have t' lie any more—not here. I let you come 'cause I hated you an' that fool wife you bought. I didn't marry you—she beat me there; but I took you from her an' kep' you away. That's done. I hope it hurt her so's you'll never be able t' fix things up with her again. You can go back to her now an' try. But don't think I wanted you, Giorgio. God, no!"

"You took me, though," he said, "an' you took the money, too."

"Yes, I took it. But it's the way I tell you. There was just one thing on this island I wanted. Now the poor fellah's dead. An' there was your wife t'night, hangin' aroun' his coffin an' cryin'. She can't have him! But she can have you; I don't want you, Giorgio. There's nothin' here I want, now. I'll go crazy if I stay. I got t' get out!"

Suddenly Giorgio hated her. He saw that she had used him in the satisfaction of her jealousy; and all the time he had supposed—had made himself suppose—that he was using her. Now something deep in him flamed slowly upward, and he came, in fact, to the defence of his wife.

"Yes," he said to Rosie, his voice gone suddenly hard, "you've got t' get out—you bet you have! 'Cause I am goin' home. You couldn't stand it here without me beside you. There's somethin' queer about your breed, Rosie. You Rosarios got too much nerves—too much edge—you're wild—you're crazy! There's your brother—too good t' work—ran away from home t' play aroun' N'York with girls that can buy him clo's. There's your father! Jus' think of a man leavin' his home an' his

job an' his daughter—chasin' off t' look f'r a son that don't want t' be found. Crazy! An' there's you, thinkin' you can fool a man like me! I've had some experience, Rosie. I ain't always lived on the island. I can tell what a woman means—when she means anythin'. I know you, girl. I've known you all your life, pretty near. I wasn't dazzled by your beauty! No, I was thinkin' o' myself, not you, an' I got what I went after. P'raps you did too. All right! But you took me an' you took my money, an' that makes you what you are. Now you got t' go, 'cause all the Fist knows, Rosie. We ain't kep' things very dark. No."

Rosie gazed at him through the fog, and he could hear the sneer in her voice as she answered, "You'll have a hard time explainin' t' Angela why you been comin' t' see me."

"Mrs. Vinti needn't bother you an' I," he said. "You got t' get out. You won't have me standin' by you any more, an' everyone that knows you is goin' to give you hell!"

Rosie laughed. She was going away; his threats didn't make any difference. In the world she was going to, nobody would know her past—nobody would care about her past; she was going to escape from her past. Yet Giorgio's words touched her with a queer chill. She had a sudden realization that in executing this coup for the wounding of Angela, she had taken a long leap out of the past, and she saw that in leaving the island, she would be taking a long leap into the unknown future. Giorgio's words filled her with a kind of foreboding. It was as if her time had come.

She maintained her assurance, however. She wasn't

going down, she told herself; she wasn't going down—she was going on, simply going on.

"Don't forget that I ain't alone in this," she said. "You've done somethin' t' your wife as well as t' me. She ain't goin' to meet you like a hero when you go back."

"I don't have t' worry, Rosie, an' she don't. 'S no use talkin' about it. You're done—that's the thing! That shows you what you've won. You hated my wife an' you tried t' do her some kind o' harm. Well, that's where I came in. I see you'd come t' the point o' meetin' me like I offered you long ago, an' I could get rid o' you at the same time, so's you'd never bother her or me again. There's just one sure way for a man t' beat a woman, an' that's the way I beat you. Angela an' me can stand what's comin' to us. You can't stand the punishment that's comin' t' you. You can't live any longer with decent people."

"Decent people!" she cried. "Damn your decent people!"

In those words she sneered at all the canons of respectability, abandoned all the ideals she had struggled for, turned her back upon the past for ever.

"Don't preach, Vinti," she went on. "I ain't goin' t' miss you an' the other decent people o' the Fist. I'm goin' t' be free o' the Fist, an' I've made your precious wife suffer some. That's what I was after, an' I'm willin' t' pay by gettin' out. You're on'y a man an' you don't know what she's been through while you been comin' t' me."

"A month!" he exclaimed. "She's had a hard time f'r a month, p'raps. But her hard time's over now, an'

yours is jus' beginnin'. You don't know what you've got t' pay, girl. You're goin' t' find a hard bunch o' fellahs in N'York, an' the women—the women you'll travel with are devils."

"You ought t' know!" she sneered.

"You bet I know! An' I'm tellin' you. I know your tribe o' women, an' I know what they do to each other; an' I'm tellin' you they're devils."

"I guess I c'n take care o' myself," she said smoothly. She meant it. She felt strong, courageous.

Giorgio laughed shortly. "I guess p'raps you can," he agreed. "But they'll hurt you jus' the same; an' then you can think o' me."

"Good God!" she cried. "Why would I think o' you? You're one o' the first things I want t' forget."

"You'll remember me jus' the same."

"Oh, let's go!" she exclaimed. "We ain't doin' any good here."

Giorgio had talked himself into a good humour. He felt that, after all, he had beaten this woman. In any event, he was through with her.

"Yes," he agreed, let's go. We understand each other, an' I got t' get home."

They both stirred as they spoke.

Rosie laughed easily. "Good-bye," she said. "Give my love t' dear Angela."

"Oh, let's shake hands," he proposed mildly.

She understood the challenge in his words and she put her hand firmly into his, to show him that she was not afraid—not afraid of anything, past of future. Giorgio perceived what she meant to convey. Her courage moved

him. In spite of his recent anger, he had no hatred for her now. Actually, he felt a faint pity for her. As he held her hand he asked, "You got plenty o' money, Rosie?"

"Money? Sure!" she answered carelessly. "Sure I have, or I wouldn't be sendin' you home yet."

He shook his head vigorously, smiling toward her. "You're strong, all right," he said, "but you're like all the women o' your kind, an' your whole tribe's crazy."

She drew her hand away. They turned up the beach, each going in a separate direction, and after a moment even the sound of their footsteps was lost in the drifting fog.

Very early the next morning, before the day had broken, the wagon of Foteles, the undertaker, was driven through the sleeping settlement of the Fist, bearing the long pine box that contained Joe's body from the Santos house to the ferry at Melton. Joe was going back to Vermont.

Angela had been waiting for hours at the dark window of the room at the front of the house, listening for this last passing of the man she loved, and now, as the wagon came on, she peered into the fog in an attempt to catch some glimpse of the hearse that bore him. Her eyes could not pierce the thick gloom out of doors, but so keenly was her sense of hearing focused on the approaching wagon, she could see in imagination the driver in his seat, the revolving of the wheels, the movement of the horse, and that long pale box in the body of the vehicle. She bowed her head to pray as the wagon came on, when into the open channels of her aural sense there flowed

the roar of a sudden silence. The wagon had stopped.

Angela knew at once that it had stopped in front of the Rosario house; forgetting her prayer and raising her head, she peered into the gloom in an agony of acute interest, attempting to see. What was going on there? She found herself trembling; her body was shaken by an emotional agitation which she could not control. She was almost mad with an unnamed fear, almost frenzied with ridiculous jealousy. Then she became aware of Joe's presence in the silence behind her. She could feel his presence; she knew that he was *there*. Tears came to her eyes in sudden self-reproach; gradually she became quiet again; her agitation ceased; she gazed out into the gloom.

She could discern a wide orange glare in the fog, as if the door of the Rosario house stood open, emitting the indirect light of a lamp. Shadows cast by this light moved upon the semi-transparent surfaces of the fog as upon a screen of veils, with large, erratic motions; but there was no sound, and though Angela raised the sash a short distance, those shadows moved silently.

Soon, and suddenly, the orange glare disappeared, the opaque gloom of the morning again engulfed the world. There was the sharp, single sound of a house door being closed, and in a moment the wagon resumed its audible journey along the road.

Angela did not understand that episode at the Rosario house, but as the vehicle came on again, she abandoned her speculations regarding it and bowed her head in prayer:

"Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. . . ."

She could see again in imagination, through the acute perception of her sense of hearing, the vehicle progressing on its way, the long pine box in the body of the wagon, that splendid frame of a man, broken, empty now, moving serenely along on its last unconscious journey. In her heart there was a sympathetic pain for all the pains that body had suffered, but by her side the spirit that had been its tenant whispered, "I love Angel." Nothing could have been more true than the passing of Joe's body, yet she could not see it; and though she could not see him beside her, she knew that he was there. She did not need to see him; she did not even yearn to see him as she yearned to see that body passing in the gloom of the morning.

"Pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

As she prayed, there was a crash of glass above her head, and out of the impenetrable shadows a woman's voice—Rosie's voice—came calling, "Good-bye, Mrs. Vinti. I'm taking him away with me!"

Angela did not lift her head. With the glass shattering down about her, she prayed as the wagon passed on:

"May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen."

The sound of the horse's hoofs, the sound of the revolving wheels, the sound of that voice, died. Joe's body, proceeding on its way, descended into the marshes.

He was gone. Rosie was gone. Angela continued to kneel at the window, continued to gaze into the fog that

wove and swayed now in the first breeze of the morning as shapes and shadows gather and float in the depths of a dim crystal. She saw that passionate woman who had been her friend, attending with devotion an unresponsive, passionless body on its last journey, while the man himself, whom the woman had loved, stood silent here at her side. She was filled with pity for Rosie, for she knew that soon even that broken body would be taken from her care, and she would be left alone to wander up and down a bitter world of disillusionment and pain.

XXXII

A FEW days later Giorgio Vinti went home to his wife. It was Saturday evening. Over the island the splendour of summer hung fullblown, and across the sea the summer moon was shining.

During the days since he had parted from Rosie in the fog, Vinti had been thinking of many things. The world of his affairs had settled into a kind of quiet. His anxiety about the Fish Trust had subsided; it had made no aggressive move against him, but it stood before his consciousness like a hovering shadow. During the past week the fish had begun to run plentifully. He had at last appointed a foreman in Rosario's place. The episode with Rosie was finished; he felt in his heart that it was to be the last unlawful adventure of his life, and like a sailor who has voyaged far upon the seas, he was eager for home at last. Something like gladness stirred within him at the prospect of home, yet he was dimly melancholy at finding himself glad that his adventures were over, for it meant that his youth was done. He had no premonition of finality, in fact he looked forward to the future for his ultimate justification; but he had an unmistakable sense of change.

Yes, his youth was done. His ambitions and his passions of the past year had been the last leapings of the flame of his youth—the unconscious clutchings of his ego

at a vanishing brilliance. Among those ambitions had been his marriage and his dream of strong sons; among those passions had been his recent affair with Rosie.

Though he had, in that affair, proceeded with gusto, he had, nevertheless, advanced with a new calculation that measured every step of the way, and he was aware of unnumbered phases in which it differed from similar adventures in the past. Among other things, he knew that he had been less ardent than formerly; but mainly, as a difference, he perceived that the adventure was unlawful. He was aware of subtle consequences, never before encountered, which now seemed inescapable. In this episode with Rosie he had, for the first time, come face to face with morality. That was, in Giorgio, the definite sign that the inconsequence of his youth was ended. Mentally and emotionally he had arrived at a new stage of development.

Of course his wife was a prime factor in this changed, this enlarged view; but the fact that he had a wife was proof of the change in himself. The Giorgio who had a wife was not the same Giorgio who for so many years had gone proudly without one. Yes, his youth was done, and he turned his face at last to the realities of manhood. In the few days that had elapsed between his separation from Rosie and his return to his wife, he had thought of many things. Through the death of Joe he had come to see that a man is not necessarily done when he is dead; he saw that the influence of Mrs. Grania's life continued after she was practically forgotten; he saw that his own survival depended on what he might leave behind him when he followed them out of existence.

The urge to perpetuate himself, though not so stated,

was crying in Giorgio's soul. In the five weeks of his married life, he had come to feel the mystical pressure of the paternal instinct; and though in that time he had thwarted his impulse and diverted his forces, he now found himself, with all immediate means of diversion removed, vibrating under that cry in his soul as a stringed instrument will vibrate in the wind and give out music. This cry of paternity had become more deep and more persistent than anything Giorgio had ever known. It was spiritual and reverent, ambitious and hopeful. Though the sons for whom he yearned were undoubtedly to be his definite answer to the threat of the Fish Trust, he was urged to their birth by an impulsion stronger than any that mere expediency could command. He was vibrating in the wind of a new ambition which had been slowly evolved in his consciousness; and when, on this Saturday night, he went home to his wife, his very entrance into her presence was like a strengthening of the breeze, and he vibrated more and more rhythmically, until at last he voiced the desire that was in him.

It was after the supper-time when he arrived, and the dusk was beginning to deepen. Fireflies trailed pale lines of light in the cool deeper darkness. Angela, her work done, had gone out of doors to sit on the grass above her father's vineyard. She was serene and still, like the summer evening, quiet in spirit, wrapped in the warmth of a gentle peace.

She rose, in her light dress, at Giorgio's approach, and stood luminous in the moonlight, ready to serve this man who, she felt, could never mean anything to her again. His coming disturbed her serenity, but it was an

intrusion of no great importance. She was strangely unembarrassed in his presence, and as he came on quietly, swinging his stick in a regular rhythm, with his hat in his hand, she wondered casually what he would say.

"You goin' in, Angela?" he asked quietly.

"Not unless you want somethin'," she answered.

"Let's sit down, then," he proposed. "I want t' talk to you about things."

They sat down beside each other, not very far apart, and Giorgio, with his left hand extended to support his body, leaned toward her.

"We're married," he said, after a minute.

It was a tense moment for Giorgio. Angela might do anything with the phrase he had just uttered. He gave it out—put it into her hands, as it were—for her to do with it as she would. If she tore it indignantly to tatters and flung it back at him, admitting the phrase but denying the fact, he must accept it from her so. He could not coerce her into accepting his new ambition which he had brought to her, for his new ambition was a strange thing which would be destroyed if accomplished by means of any force whatever. She must either understand him and meet him, or by either refusing or failing to do so, deny him the achievement of this greatest conception of his life.

Angela turned and looked into his face as if trying to read what lay behind his words; then she turned her head away and waited in silence.

Her silence was a greater forbearance than Giorgio had expected of her—there were so many things she might have said—and he went on, momentarily reassured, toward the statement of his case.

"I didn't understand what it meant till now," he said; and again he paused to let her have her way with his words. He had a dim feeling that at some stage of this conversation she would inject the words "It's too late!" The premonition of that phrase was a hovering menace, but he would not deny her the opportunity to utter it. His conscience told him that in coming to her now, he *was* too late; but he would not connive with himself to evade her saying so.

"I ain't acted right," he said. "I ain't treated you right."

This time as he paused he unconsciously held his breath, so intent was he on what she would say—what she must say—to that. But still she sat and said nothing. He began to feel a threat in her silence; he was impelled to make her speak.

"You know what I've been doin', Angela?"

"Yes," she answered quietly, without moving.

If she had condemned him then, it would have been a relief. In effect, she had not broken silence at all. He wondered vaguely if she knew, in her woman's way (remembering her perceptiveness), how fearful he was. He had a sense that she was waiting to pounce upon his precious ambition at her own right time. He felt that her bitterness might be satisfied only by rendering his high hope impossible.

Something surged in Giorgio's breast. He wanted her to understand. He wanted the soul of her to come out and commune with his soul. He wanted her to help him. He had come to her with a clean idea; he wanted her to accept it, and to accept him with it. He wanted her in-

tensely. For an instant his mind lost control of his faculties, and out of the depths of him, but quietly, a cry escaped.

"Don't you care, Angela?"

He was amazed at his own words. It had not been a wise thing to ask. He saw her stiffen at those words, saw her lift her head as if at a challenge.

"Care!" she repeated. "Sure I care! Don't you suppose I've got any feelin's?"

Yes, he did; it was her feelings that he feared.

"I don't blame you," he said. Then, after a pause, he asked, "But what're we goin' t' do?"

For a long time she made no response, while he waited; then he interrupted her thoughts.

"I've come back. Will you take me back?"

She looked at him again, shifting her position.

"I married you t' be your wife," she said.

"Yes," he agreed.

Then, for the first time in relation to Giorgio's defection, she flamed with anger.

"Listen, Giorgio!" she cried, and her tone was a tone of warning—a threat. "You can't treat me like you treat them other women. You can't come an' go as you like between me an' them. I'm your wife!"

He shifted his position under the fire of her indignant protest, and suddenly he felt that the dangers he had feared were passed. She did care. He was suddenly, humbly penitent—penitent for her sake. He wanted to take his wife in his arms, to pledge himself to her protection and service; but his sense counselled caution, and he sat apart.

"Listen," he said. "I've come back t' tell you that I'm through with women. I know now what I didn't know before, an' I've come home t' stay."

Angela had no idea what it was that he had come to know, but she took in his words with a kind of relaxation. She had been unconsciously holding herself tense, determined to bring him to an acknowledgment of her position. Now he had acknowledged her position, had submitted by implication to the authority of its rights. She could ask for nothing more now. Later she could demand performance according to his words, but of that performance she did not feel sure. No promise he might give, she felt, could guarantee his constancy. But she was going to take him back—what else could she do? Physically he meant nothing to her; but she felt a clear responsibility for his immortal soul. Yes, she was going to take him back, and for the present she must give his good intentions full credit; but she would warn him.

"If you've come t' stay," she said, "remember you got t' stay. You can't ever come back like this again, remember. You can't ever do like this again."

The warning, when uttered, sounded futile, ridiculous; and she added, "P'raps I ought t' tell you, Giorgio—I don't need you. I been through too much; an' I been through it all alone. Nothin's worth enough t' make me suffer any more. I won't stand any more—not for anyone. I'm goin' t' be happy. I ain't goin' t' let you nor anyone interfere with me."

Giorgio gathered from her warning that she did not trust him. He would have liked to come home to a wife who would have greeted him and his ambition a little more gently. But to himself he admitted the justice of

his wife's attitude. She couldn't have been more gentle, he acknowledged.

"I'm sorry for all I've done, Angela. I've come back t' stay, I tell you, t' make you happy an' be happy with you."

He leaned over and took her hand as he spoke, and she made no resistance.

"Well . . ." she accepted quietly. She didn't believe him, but she was going to take him back.

They were both silent for several minutes. The moon flooded earth and sea with radiance. From the shore there floated up, like gentle sighs, the sound of waves breaking sleepily.

"Angela," Giorgio said at last, very softly, "Angela, you're young. I'm gettin' old. I don't want t' die an' be forgotten. I want t' go on livin', even after I'm dead."

She didn't understand what he meant and waited for him to go on. She wondered faintly if he could know that in spite of his death Joe was alive, actually there beside her, sustaining her, filling her with a contented determination to be happy, making this other man who had come home unnecessary to her.

"If I died now," Giorgio proceeded, "it'd be jus' the same 's if I'd never lived. Nobody'd care, an' I'd be soon forgotten."

He paused again, half hoping that she might assure him of her remembrance, but she didn't.

"I want t' be the father o' sons, Angela; sons that'll remember me when I'm dead."

He uttered the words quietly, but there was in his tone something of the intensity of a cry. Angela was suddenly sure of him—she suddenly understood him—knew

that he had come home to stay. Awaking to the meaning of his words, she perceived the height of his desire. She found herself responding to his mood with a tremulous interest. Sons! Her imagination seemed to leap at the word. She felt at her breast a strange constriction, like the clutching pressure of small hands. Some unfamiliar emotion was flooding through her, flooding over her.

In a kind of panic she turned to Joe, felt him there beside her, calm and reassuring, heard again his words—"Be happy." He was urging her on to happiness; and there, on the other hand, sat her husband, offering her a clear vision for her life. Slowly there settled within her, light and soft and satisfied, an indescribable sense of assurance involving some great accomplishment. The future was calling to her, and something was surging within her in answer to the call.

"I want t' be the father o' sons," Giorgio repeated. "An' I want you t' be their mother."

Her mood developed in response to his words. She felt herself coupled to her husband by extraordinary bonds—extraordinary because her feeling was inconsistent with the facts of their married life. Her old faith in marriage revived, and she sensed, behind the surfaces of Giorgio's bluster, banter, money and passions, the simplicity of his nature, the loneliness of his soul.

"I've seen 'em, Angela," he began again. "I've seen our sons. They'll be dark an' strong an' proud. Americans they'll be. D'you want t' be an American, Angela?"

He asked her wistfully, and waited for her reply.

"Yes," she said, "if you want t' be. I b'long here."

Giorgio was gratified at that. Her reply meant that she accepted his ambition.

"Yes, they'll be Americans, girl." A tinge of enthusiasm had crept into his voice. "They'll go t' college an' be proud. I've seen 'em walkin' on the beach, tall an' strong, Angela—masters. They won't forget me when I'm dead, an' they'll love you—they'll call you 'mother'—they'll love you after you're dead too."

Giorgio had recalled his sons out of the oblivion into which he had driven them when he had gone to see Rosie, and he held them in his consciousness, tenderly idealized, made precious by their absence and by the thought that he had been unjust to them.

Tears gathered in Angela's eyes as her husband talked —not at the thought of his death or her own, but at the recognition of Giorgio's hope and trust in the future. She recognized and accepted them as her own. He had set up for her his own shining vision, and she understood dimly that he had thus brought and placed before her the desire of her heart, never before named. She reached out now and took up that vision, as her hand might have reached out and picked up a beautiful gem, and she put it away, as she might have put away a gem, in her bosom —felt it lying there against her heart.

She felt it there in her bosom, very precious, very carefully to be guarded, and it reflected the light from countless new sources, illuminating her mind. Her imagination became fruitful and she, too, saw her sons. She saw them as Giorgio had suggested, dark and strong and proud; and superimposing her own ideal upon his vision of them, she saw them handsome also, and kind.

She was silent for a time, wrapped in the contemplation

of the future—her sons went with long strides down the beach, side by side; and then, slowly emerging from her vision, she was aware that they were both—Joe.

That was the moment of her conscious dedication to the future. The realities of her life were for ever to be borne up and supported on the strength of her illusions —the illusion of the past and the illusion of the future. Her life was to be a bridge spanning a valley space between two high points in unreality—the two splendid peaks of her ideal remembered and her ideal hoped for —the shining peaks of her love. Behind her stood the vision of Joe, the symbol of the past, of dead realities, of mysterious happiness attained; before her stood the vision of her sons, the justification of her life, the reward of all her pain—Joe resurrected and moving in the flesh. Across the valley space between those peaks stretched the bridge of her days, and she was to move out upon it with steady feet, her eyes upon the heights.

She rose at last and Giorgio rose beside her, and through the moonlight flooding the world they went together into the house.

Later, as Angela knelt in her nightgown in the square room off the kitchen, she approached again, as she prayed, the God of whom she had been fearful, the God whom she had decried. Then, rising from her knees, she gazed at the pictured Madonna hanging above the bed; and in those deep lovely eyes she beheld the strength of women that endures all pain, the eternal hope and faith of mothers in their sons.

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